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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Friday, February 18, 2022, at 10 a.m.

Senate

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2022

The Senate met at 10:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

O God, You are our heavenly parent, and we thank You for every expression of Your love.

Though we hear about war and rumors of war, You continue to deserve our ceaseless praise. We praise You that though wrong seems often so strong, You continue to rule Your universe. Lord, why can't nations learn to live together in peace?

Today, use our Senators for Your glory. Keep them mindful of Your presence, eager to do Your will, and loyal to the royal You have placed in every heart.

We pray in Your sovereign Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

FURTHER ADDITIONAL EXTENDING GOVERNMENT FUNDING ACT—Motion to Proceed—Resumed

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.R. 6617, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 267, H.R. 6617, a bill making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2022, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Nevada.

Ms. ROSEN. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

(Ms. ROSEN assumed the Chair.)

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

CRIME

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, for the first time in 12 years, an out-

right majority of Americans say crime has gotten worse in their area over the past year.

Many Democrats have spent the last year and a half trying to defund police, smear law enforcement, and go soft on crime. As a result, innocent citizens have spent a year and a half watching murders, carjackings, and other violent crimes literally skyrocket.

On Monday, in my hometown of Louisville, KY, we were stunned by what appears to have been an assassination attempt against a Jewish mayoral candidate by a prominent far-left activist who previously called for defunding our police department.

This far-left Black Lives Matter activist and defund-the-police cheerleader walked into a Jewish Democrat's campaign headquarters and opened fire.

Obviously, every aspect of this is still under investigation, including the suspect's mental condition. But guess what. He has already been let out of jail—already let out of jail.

A leftwing bail fund partnered with BLM Louisville to bail him out. Less than 48 hours after this activist tried to literally murder a politician, the radical left bailed their comrade out of jail.

This is just jaw-dropping. The innocent people of Louisville deserve better.

Since 2020, a long list of prominent corporations have donated or pledged enormous amounts of money to the radical nationwide BLM parent organization. One wonders if any of their corporate money helped spring this would-be assassin from jail.

• This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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Now, I am confident that if an activist claiming to be conservative tried to assassinate a politician, whatever his mental state, the media would open a 24/7 national conversation about rhetoric on the right. Somehow, I doubt attempted murder by a BLM activist will get that same treatment. I doubt we will have a national conversation about the constant chorus of powerful voices calling our society evil.

I raise this double standard because it is not limited to media coverage. We have seen this extend into our legal system itself.

In May of 2020, when Minneapolis was engulfed in lawless riots, one rioter broke into a pawn shop and started a fire that burned it down. His act of arson actually killed somebody. But the Federal attorneys, who were supposed to represent the victim and the people, went out of their way to push for an unusually lenient sentence. They asked for the typical sentencing guideline to be cut in half. Why? Well, because, they wrote, the defendant was an angry political protester who simply lost his cool. They wrote, "As anyone watching the news worldwide knows, many other people in Minnesota were similarly caught up"—as if that were an excuse. This is the sentencing memo from the prosecutors. It reads like it was ghostwritten by the defense. They even tried to quote Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to explain why this guy burned down a pawn shop. What a backward attitude.

We cannot have Federal officials acting like leftwing political violence is more acceptable than any other violence. If anything, political violence is uniquely unacceptable in a democratic republic.

Now, I placed a hold on President Biden's nominee to take over as U.S. attorney in Minnesota until he pledged he would keep political favoritism out of his prosecutions. Fortunately, he quickly said so in writing. He also knows Republicans will be watching.

The American people need public servants to crack down on crime and defend their safety—crack down on crime and defend their safety—less pandering to woke mobs; more protecting innocent families.

ENERGY

Madam President, now on an entirely different matter, Washington Democrats' inflation is slamming consumers with the highest prices in 40 years. One of the toughest blows has been the soaring cost of a trip to the gas pump. A gallon of regular costs a full dollar more today than it did a year ago.

So after triggering a historic run of inflation and hammering American producers with anti-energy policies designed to restrict supply, our Democratic colleagues are suddenly talking about gas prices. Here is their bold, creative plan: temporarily suspending the gas tax, to the tune of 18 cents—oh, and excluding diesel—a slap in the face to truckers and a further burden on the supply chain. Oh, and just to make the

political games transparent, they want this to expire right after the midterms, as soon as the next Congress is sworn in.

Democrats want to blow a \$20 billion hole in highway funding so they can try to mask the effects of their own liberal policies on working Americans. They have spent the entire year waging a holy war on affordable American energy, and now—now—they want to use a pile of taxpayers' money to literally hide the consequences.

As the senior Senator from West Virginia has pointed out, "People want their bridges and their roads, and we have an infrastructure bill we just passed this summer, and they want to take all that away. It just doesn't make sense."

He added that this half-baked proposal doesn't make any more sense than the President's pointless decision to take oil out of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve last year.

President Clinton's Treasury Secretary, Larry Summers, called this stunt "short-sighted, ineffective, goofy and gimmicky." That is the Secretary of the Treasury in the Bill Clinton administration.

Back in 2008, then-Candidate Obama himself said this:

We're arguing over a gimmick that would save you half a tank of gas over the course of the entire summer so that everyone in Washington can pat themselves on the back and say they did something. Well, let me tell you, this isn't an idea designed to get you through the summer—it's designed to get them through an election.

That is Barack Obama in 2008, and he was right.

Look, if Democrats actually want to help the American people fill their tanks, they wouldn't have been attacking American energy every way possible for the entire year. President Biden made killing the Keystone XL Pipeline his day 1 priority. Democrats voted in lockstep to endorse President Biden's ban on new energy exploration on Federal lands. At every turn, in every way, Democrats have made it harder to produce affordable and reliable American energy. Take any form of energy, and if people in San Francisco don't find it fashionable, the Biden administration has gone after it.

Three years ago, under Republican policies, the United States became a net exporter of oil for the first time in more than 70 years. From a sheer mathematical perspective, for the very first time since World War II, we were producing all that we needed and then some. Alas, a very different philosophy now controls Washington. In President Biden's first year, our own oil imports from Russia—from Russia—hit a new alltime high.

But as we speak, events in Eastern Europe are reminding the entire world that energy abundance is not just about families' pocketbooks; there is a colossal strategic cost when our Nation and our allies become economically dependent on countries that don't like us very much.

Some of our European allies have spent many years voluntarily winding down reliable sources like nuclear and coal and refusing to tap into their own considerable natural gas reserves via fracking. Instead, they gambled on less reliable sources and outsourced their perceived dirty work to places like Russia. Western European elites decided they wanted their energy production out of sight and out of mind, and Putin was all too happy to oblige them.

Even after Russia invaded Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014, Germany willingly signed up for Putin's Nord Stream 2 Pipeline. It would negate Ukraine's own pipelines and deny the money and leverage that Ukraine needs to keep Russia at bay, but Germany backed it. Meanwhile, Berlin put off building liquid natural gas terminals, instead choosing to rely on Russian gas and refusing to diversify its import options. I am hopeful the latest indications that Germany is reconsidering this will prove to be accurate.

The Biden administration is scrambling to connect our at-risk allies with some energy resources from everywhere else—everywhere else. But it should not have taken this latest Kremlin misbehavior to remind the West that self-sufficiency actually matters. It matters. And Democrats have still not flinched in their broader war against our own—our own—U.S. production.

Glitzzy summits in Paris and finger-wagging climate rhetoric are one way to approach energy policy. Actually exploring and developing abundant, affordable, and reliable domestic energy is another approach, and that is the approach that will actually work.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

DOJ APPOINTMENTS

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, most people would be stumped by the question I am about to ask, and that is, when it comes to the commission of crime, what is the largest criminal investigation in the history of the United States? The answer is January 6, 2021. Over 725 individuals have been charged with a Federal crime as a result of that insurrectionist mob that descended on the Capitol.

The reason I raise that is that we are going through regular—sometimes daily, sometimes weekly—lectures from Republicans about who is soft on crime, who is really on the side of the American people when it comes to defending their homes and their families.

I listen to this debate on a regular basis as chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Every single nominee who comes from the Biden White House is subject to being challenged as to whether they are going to defund the police or whether they are soft on crime. Yet I have to say that it is hard to explain that these same Republicans asking these pointed questions to nominees are nowhere to be found when it comes to discussing January 6, 2021. In fact, many of them were cheerleaders and apologists for the very

demonstrators who came into this United States Capitol.

To think that a national political party like the Republican Party of the United States of America branded this insurrectionist mob and their attack on the Capitol as “legitimate political discourse”—that was the official statement, the unanimous statement of the Republican Party.

Now, a few Republican Senators have dissented. Thank you. But why haven't more? Why won't they step up and say a crime is a crime? If over 700 people descended on this Capitol and are being charged with a crime, they should have to pay the price, whatever it happens to be, because this just wasn't some idle political exercise. At the end of the day, we had 6 people dead as a result of that insurrectionist mob, including law enforcement officers, and 140 law enforcement officers attacked during the course of that day. We all saw the videos. There are plenty of them.

Imagine, if you will, the so-called innocent, legitimate political discourse travelers to Washington just happened to bring bear spray with them so they could spray police in the face with a poisonous compound that could, in fact, harm them and did. Does that sound like a group of political tourists to you? It doesn't to me. These are violent individuals who are being called to task for having assaulted this Capitol, broken down the windows and the doors, came in here aping along these desks in the Chamber, forcing the Vice President of the United States and Senators who were there that day—and I was one of them—to exit by the backdoor for their lives. And here we have this “We are not soft on crime” message from Republicans who are making excuses, not to mention the former President, Donald Trump, who said that given the opportunity, he would pardon these demonstrators. It is no surprise in light of what he has done in the past.

But being lectured to regularly by the Republicans about who respects law enforcement and who is soft on crime—most of them cannot answer the basic question of what they would do when it comes to the January 6 demonstrators, and the answer they give is totally insufficient.

Madam President, you know personally, because you were here on the floor yesterday, that isn't all of it. I listen to all this talk about prosecutors doing their job, and I can't help but think what we went through yesterday on the floor of the U.S. Senate when the junior Senator from Arkansas, a Republican Senator, stood here and vainly tried to defend what he is doing.

Do you know what he is doing? You do personally. He is stopping the appointment of U.S. attorneys, Federal prosecutors, in State after State, and he is stopping the appointment of U.S. marshals who keep those courtrooms safe and the judges safe and transport prisoners and seek out fugitives. He is

personally stopping them from being appointed in the ordinary course of business in the U.S. Senate.

You have to ask yourself why. There must be a problem with their qualifications. No. There is not a single question being asked about the qualifications of these individuals.

Mr. Frierson in the State of Nevada, a person whom you and Senator CORTEZ MASTO described on the floor yesterday who would be the U.S. attorney there, clearly is well qualified for that position. The same is true in Illinois.

Our choice, Senator DUCKWORTH's and my choice for the U.S. marshal to serve in the Northern District of Illinois, is an individual with 30 years—30 years—of law enforcement experience, a chief of police in one of the larger suburbs in the city of Chicago.

Do we need the U.S. Marshal's Office to be reinvigorated and dedicated to its purpose? Of course we do. It wasn't that many years ago when the family of one of our highly respected Federal judges was literally murdered in their home by a deranged individual who didn't care for the way he was treated by that judge. It is a very real question of personal safety. Yet one Republican Senator from Arkansas is stopping the appointments of these U.S. attorneys and U.S. marshals to execute the laws of the land.

Don't tell me you respect law enforcement, and don't tell me you want to fight crime and then turn around and tie the hands of the Department of Justice, keeping U.S. attorneys off the job and U.S. marshals away from their responsibilities. That is the reality.

If we are going to get serious about fighting crime—and I believe we should—it is all hands on deck. Every Federal law enforcement official should be doing their part. They cannot do their part when the junior Senator from Arkansas stops us from even approving their appointments to these positions. These appointments remain vacant, and we pay a price for it.

When we receive lectures from the minority leader or from others on the floor about respect for law and law enforcement, I would say he ought to start with his own caucus. He ought to call in the junior Senator from Arkansas and say: Enough. You are stepping on our message. We are trying to show that we are for law and order, and you are stopping the appointment of U.S. attorneys and U.S. marshals who are dedicated to that purpose and risk their lives to do so.

That is not consistent with good law enforcement or sound law and order as far as I am concerned.

(Mr. BOOKER assumed the Chair.)

Let me conclude by saying that the nominees who come before the Senate for these judicial positions are a wide variety of individuals with amazing backgrounds—incredible backgrounds—and who are consistently rated unanimously “well qualified” by the American Bar Association. It is true that some of them used to sit at

the other table in the criminal courtrooms, not at the prosecutor's table, but there is nothing wrong with some balance on the court, making sure that we have all points of view considered and certainly, above all, the law considered.

We hear, from time to time, compelling anecdotes, such as the one given by the minority leader related to Louisville, KY. I am not familiar with the details. But if we are serious about making America safer, we need to pull together on a bipartisan basis. We need to approve President Biden's budget, which provides more resources for law enforcement but also more resources for violence intervention.

The Presiding Officer knows personally, as mayor of a large city in New Jersey, that we can't arrest our way out of the crime problem in America. Certainly, we should pursue law enforcement measures and responses when necessary and apply the law without question, but it takes more than that. If we are going to reach into the communities around America and try to stop this violence before it occurs, then we have to look at other approaches.

I am happy to report that last week we announced the introduction of the Violence Against Women Act. This is a measure which, for 3 years, we have been trying to find common ground. We did it. We finally did it.

I want to salute Senator FEINSTEIN as the lead Democratic sponsor. I was happy to join her.

I also want to salute Senators LISA MURKOWSKI and JONI ERNST, from Alaska and Iowa, respectively. They have done such extraordinary work in putting together a bill.

You say to yourself: How does this fit in with violence against women, the question of crime in America?

Well, I can tell you—the Presiding Officer knows this personally, and it is worth repeating—that I went to the juvenile facility in Cook County years ago and said: Who are these teenagers who came to the Earth in the usual way and then turned to gangs and guns and killing wantonly? What happened to these kids along the way?

Well, there are plenty of reasons and issues related to mental health, but one of the things that was compelling was the observation that over 90 percent of them had been victims of trauma. Trauma comes in many forms, not just physical trauma but to witness trauma on another person or to be a victim yourself, to have a home where there is no support, no encouragement, and no values being taught. Those kids are the ones who end up, many times, in these predicaments.

What can we do about it?

Well, we can probably arrest them after the crime has been committed, but that really doesn't solve the problem. We have got to do what we can to intervene in their lives at a stage when they can be saved. I don't believe that

everyone can be saved, but I do fundamentally believe in redemption and in our responsibility to engage in it.

That is why this Violence Against Women Act is so important. If we can reach into a home where physical or mental abuse has taken place of a spouse or the children and give that person, first, a caring heart—someone who will listen and hear them out—and then advise them on what to do to keep themselves safe and keep their kids safe and what to do in relation to law enforcement, that is a positive move toward taking violence out of that family and out of America.

So I hope that when we talk about this whole issue of a safer America, which we all aspire to, we do it in a balanced way; that we talk about effective prosecution by members of law enforcement who are playing by the rules and that we also realize it takes more than that. We need an investment in the communities to make a difference. President Biden knows that. He included it in this year's budget and will again in next year's budget. We ought to be standing up and supporting that as well.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AGRICULTURE

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, farming and ranching are the lifeblood of my home State and a way of life for many South Dakotans, and advocating for farmers and ranchers is one of my top priorities here in Congress.

As a longtime member of the Senate's Agriculture Committee, I have been able to help shape multiple farm bills and make sure that South Dakota's agriculture producers' voices are heard here in Washington.

Lately, I have been hearing a lot of reports from South Dakota's producers and ag exporters about ocean carriers refusing to transport American agricultural products. This is, obviously, a major concern for farmers and ranchers, who are already struggling with the burden of inflation and high input costs and who rely on exports for part of their livelihoods, which is why I recently introduced bipartisan legislation to address violations of free and fair competition in shipping and to create a more level playing field for American producers.

Our bill gives the Federal Maritime Commission greater authority to respond to discriminatory ocean carrier practices, and it provides the FMC with the tools to more quickly resolve detention and demurrage disputes.

This legislation will bring greater efficiency and transparency to a process that leaves many shippers frustrated

and will bring long-term positive changes to the maritime supply chain, which, I hope, will benefit ag exporters, importers, and consumers alike.

Another one of my priorities lately has been to address the Biden administration's proposed Waters of the United States, or WOTUS, rule. WOTUS concerns which water features are regulated at the Federal level.

Now, generally, the Clean Water Act only calls for navigable waters to be regulated at the Federal level, which are things like rivers and streams that connect to larger bodies of water. But, like President Obama before him, President Biden is trying to expand Federal jurisdiction to regulate things like ditches, prairie potholes, and streams that only flow when it rains. Needless to say, this would subject nearly every corner of South Dakota to this DC land grab.

Farmers and ranchers could be subjected to the time-consuming process of having each and every pothole and ditch examined by Federal regulators, and they could face massive fines should they run afoul of DC regulators looking to halt everyday farming and ranching practices. Those fines can be \$25,000 a day. That is not acceptable.

Any WOTUS rule that is going to work for farmers and ranchers has to include categorical exclusions for features like ditches, prairie potholes, and stock ponds, which is why I recently led the entire Senate Republican conference in writing to the EPA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regarding the Biden administration's proposed WOTUS rule. We urged the administration to suspend its WOTUS rulemaking until the Supreme Court rules on the Clean Water Act case it is currently considering, which would effectively invalidate the Biden WOTUS regulations.

Implementing the WOTUS rule now, when it could be overturned in the near future, would subject farmers and ranchers to an unacceptable level of uncertainty as they plan for the upcoming planting season. It is very likely that the Supreme Court will force the administration to go back to the drawing board, which would, hopefully, result in a less intrusive and more workable rule that won't subject farmers and ranchers to even more Washington redtape.

As a supporter of South Dakota and our Nation's corn and soybean farmers—and as a supporter of clean energy—I have long championed the clean energy potential of biofuels. The EPA's renewable fuel standard, which requires that a minimum volume of renewable fuel be sold in the United States each year, is a significant tool for reducing the carbon footprint of our transportation sector.

Unfortunately, the Biden administration has shown a willingness to undermine the blending targets set by the renewable fuel standard, going as far as a proposal to retroactively reduce the 2020 renewable volume obligation, which had already been finalized.

The Biden EPA tried to suggest that these cuts would be made up for with higher 2022 blending targets, but with a new precedent, there would be nothing to stop the administration from again caving to oil refiners and retroactively reducing volume obligations in the future.

That is why I recently joined a bipartisan group of my colleagues in urging the EPA to prioritize the renewable fuel standard by maintaining the increased blending requirements for 2022, denying all pending small refinery exemptions, eliminating proposed retroactive cuts to the 2020 renewable volume obligations, and setting 2021 renewable fuel standard volumes at the statutory levels.

Unfortunately, the administration remains almost singularly focused on electric vehicles rather than on the readily available and proven clean energy contributions of biofuels. Ethanol, biodiesel, and now sustainable aviation fuel can drive down emissions and help reduce our demand for oil—an important consideration given soaring gas prices and the fact that this administration is forcing us to rely more on foreign oil production.

Now, currently, some of my colleagues are promoting a report that was conveniently issued right before yesterday's EPW Committee hearing on the renewable fuel standard. My colleagues, who rarely pass on an opportunity to malign biofuels, say the report undercuts the growing body of research that says biofuels cut emissions by as much as 46 percent or more compared to gasoline.

To this, I will say that if you are concerned about accurate accounting of biofuel emissions, I invite you to co-sponsor my bill, the bipartisan Adopt GREET Act. This bill would require the EPA to update its greenhouse gas modeling for ethanol and biodiesel by using the Department of Energy's GREET model. Let's put energy technologies head-to-head. I call on the chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee to mark up my bipartisan bill.

Biofuels also provide a highly important market for corn and soybean farmers whose crops and their byproducts go into biofuel production. And it is incredibly unfortunate that the administration continues to overlook the clean energy potential of biofuels and the associated benefits for our Nation's farmers.

I sent two letters to President Biden with a number of my colleagues seeking a meeting to discuss all the ways biofuels could complement his agenda and noting the bipartisan support for ethanol and biodiesel. Unfortunately, it quickly became clear that the President and his administration had little interest in the proven clean energy potential of biofuels. But I will continue to do everything I can here in Washington to promote this clean energy resource and to expand opportunities for South Dakota producers.

No matter the season, South Dakota farmers and ranchers will always be one of my top priorities here in Washington. I continue to work to help farmers and ranchers deal with the challenges of inflation, which are hitting our farm communities hard, and I continue to press the administration to ensure that the meatpacking industry is held accountable for any unfair practices.

Whatever the challenges—and in the farming life, there are always many—our Nation's farmers and ranchers keep pushing forward to feed our Nation and the world, and I will continue to do all that I can to ensure that they have the resources that they need to carry out that mission.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOKER). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I want to begin my remarks today with a few words to specifically urge American seniors and the immunocompromised to continue to protect themselves against COVID-19 by ensuring that you are fully vaccinated, including a booster shot and by wearing a high-quality mask.

As States around the country begin to unwind mask and vaccine mandates, I implore America's seniors to remain vigilant against this virus. First, get boosted. The vaccine is the most powerful tool we have to protect yourself against COVID-19 infection. We know that the vaccine continues to be highly effective at preventing serious illness and death from COVID-19, but we also know that thousands of Americans have died from breakthrough cases of COVID-19, and the vast majority are over the age of 60.

In Massachusetts alone, 2,200 vaccinated individuals have died of COVID-19, and more than 93 percent of those deaths were over the age of 60. We are 2 percent of America's population. So you can multiply that 2,000 to get an idea as to what has happened with people who are "fully vaccinated" but who are older and who still contract the coronavirus.

So we have to just make sure that everyone gets this message straight. For many Americans, they are going to be told: You don't have to wear masks. But for many others there has to be a strong message: You should continue to wear your mask to protect yourself.

And although I have called upon the CDC to track and share this data about the deaths over the age of 60, they just haven't done so. So if we extrapolate the Massachusetts number, there may very well have been already over 100,000 Americans—overwhelmingly, seniors—

who have died, despite the fact that they have received two shots of the vaccine. So let's just make sure that we deliver that message correctly. Keep your mask on.

This is a very good mask. There are KF94s. We have a very good N95 mask here that is absolutely certified by NIOSH. But many of these other masks that people are wearing just aren't going to give you the protection, which you need, so we need a strong message that goes out to seniors especially but to anyone who is immunocompromised and to children who have not been vaccinated. When this "You can take off your mask" era begins, let's just understand that there are going to be very many vulnerable people out there.

So from my perspective, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has also reported that the unvaccinated seniors were 90 times more likely to die of COVID-19 than those who received the vaccine booster. But I will say it again: If you haven't already, get vaccinated and get a booster.

An average of 2,300 people died from COVID nationwide in the past week per day—overwhelmingly, people over the age of 60—and each death is a tragedy for their families or their communities. They are our grandmothers, our grandfathers, our parents, our veterans who fought for democracy. They are irreplaceable members of our lives, and we have already lost too many to COVID-19.

But we have a powerful way to help, and that is to wear a mask. Again, if you put on these masks—here is a KF94—this will give you most of the protection you need. But please do not take it off because everyone else is indoors now saying the mask mandate indoors is off—not if you are in this vulnerable category. It should not be. Understand that the risk is still there.

Here is the second point. I am urging you to continue to protect yourself, wear a high-quality mask. The CDC updated in January its masking guidance to recommend that the general public and especially seniors and those who are immunocompromised use higher quality masks, like the N95s, the KF94s, and the KN95s. We are seeing welcome decreases in rates of new infections right now, but these populations are still the most vulnerable to COVID. Just because younger people may be using their masks less, it does not mean that those at higher risk should stop being vigilant. Continue to use a high-quality mask to protect yourself when you are indoors and around others.

Getting a high-quality mask should be an easy thing to do, but with less-than-robust information, sometimes limited supplies, and a lot of counterfeits abounding, it has been harder than it should be for consumers to stay educated and protected. That is why I am pleased to see the Biden administration distribute 400 million nonsurgical N95 masks from the Strategic National Stockpile to the public. The

masks are available at retail pharmacies and community health centers, so go get one. Ask a friend or a family member to bring one to you.

Make sure you are wearing a protective mask. Understand that surgical masks give you less protection. A cloth mask gives you much less protection. Just understand that, especially if you are in a vulnerable category.

I want to say this over and over again. If you are over 60, you are in that category, so just protect yourself. That small item can be what it is that protects you and your family members.

Just make sure the masks we use are the best, the most accessible, the most affordable, and the most reliable that they can be. It is not always convenient, but we need to continue to protect ourselves. I urge those Americans over the age of 60 and those who are immunocompromised to continue to mask up.

UKRAINE

Mr. President, now I would just like to move on quickly to a different topic.

As we watch President Putin amass tens of thousands of soldiers on the border of Ukraine, we must confront the fuel that powers this show of military might—specifically, fossil fuels.

Our global addiction to oil and natural gas from Russia and from Saudi Arabia keeps us locked into dangerous cycles of conflict and corruption, but we have a way out. We can build a pathway to a more prosperous future, a more peaceful future. We can build cities powered by cheap, clean electricity, build all-electric vehicles for our roads, and build homes that are healthier and more energy efficient than ever before.

By putting 25 million new electric vehicles on our roads, we can stop all oil imports from Russia and Saudi Arabia into the United States of America. That is 25 million all-electric vehicles. That is a direct message to the business model of Russia and of Saudi Arabia. That is the U.S. Congress passing legislation that propels the all-electric vehicle revolution here and sets a model for the rest of the country.

But rather than invest in that clean, affordable, healthy future, our country and the global economy are being held hostage by the American Petroleum Institute and their Big Oil buddies. Rather than supporting energy policies that secure our independence and our future, Big Oil pushes policies that secure their profit margins. At the same time that we get crocodile tears from Republicans over American fossil fuel leases, those same leases are feeding the American Petroleum Institute and not the United States of America.

In 2021, we exported one out of every four barrels of oil we produced, and we are exporting them abroad because in 2015, the Republicans voted to end the decades-long oil export ban in the United States. It was the Republican votes that put company profits over consumer protections and climate policies. So our energy prices rose at home while we were left to deal with the

health and climate crisis created in this rush to export and profit. At the same time, we continued to import Russian and Saudi oil. That is what we are doing right now—propping up those regimes and supporting their financial reserves.

The journey to energy independence simply does not run on fossil fuels. How does it run? It runs on solar; on wind; on battery storage; on clean, zero-carbon energy; on a clean energy future for our country. We can reimagine a future that is free from fossil fuel conflict. We can reimagine a future powered by the light of the Sun, not by oil controlled by the barrel of a gun. We can tell Russia we don't need their oil any more than we need their caviar. That is a message we can send by passing legislation that unleashes this clean energy revolution. We can reimagine a future where American ingenuity, manufacturing, and jobs drive our allies forward into a global clean energy revolution.

This future isn't far off beyond the horizon. It is right in front of us, and it is already putting Americans to work and keeping lights on across this country.

In 2010, we had 1 million jobs in solar, wind, and energy efficiency. By 2020, that more than doubled to more than 2 million jobs. Now we have all of those millions of workers out there, and we can double it again and double it again. We can create millions of new clean energy jobs for millions of Americans across this country.

In 2008, we only had 26,000 megawatts of solar. Today, we have upwards of 264,000 megawatts of solar and wind capacity combined on our grid.

The electric vehicle revolution is already on its way. Automakers are pledging to produce 40 million new electric vehicles just in the United States. That is 2 million barrels of oil that are out of our system forever that we don't need. That is the oil from Russia that we import today. That is the oil we import today from Saudi Arabia. That is what we have to do in our country. To put that in context, just 10 years ago, there were only 73,000 electric vehicles sold all year in the United States.

We can do this. Our opportunity is great. We have a chance to use the Build Back Better bill to send a message: We are going to save money, save energy, save industrial communities, save all of us from a world made unstable through fossil fuel creating crisis after crisis on this planet.

This is the power of the American-led clean energy revolution. Looking at the alternative, with troops paid by fossil fuel money on the border of Ukraine, I know what kind of future I want and I think the American people want to fight for.

We have to destroy the business model of Russia and Middle Eastern countries that have been sources of problems for American national security for more than a generation. That

is the opportunity we are all presented with right now. That is why Build Back Better—that is why President Biden's vision of wind and solar, all-electric vehicles, battery-storage technologies, and clean energy technologies by the millions being deployed in our country, will create millions of new jobs, reduce greenhouse gases, and improve our national security.

This is the healthcare, the environmental, the national security, and the moral issue of our time. If we haven't learned another lesson from Ukraine, it should be that the time is now for us to act so that 10 years from now, the next generation of young Americans can look back and say we did act, we did destroy that business model.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Alabama.

TRIBUTE TO SHANNON HINES

Mr. SHELBY. Thank you, Mr. President. You are being very kind today.

Today, I rise to pay tribute to a longtime, vital member of my staff, Shannon Hines. There aren't many in the Senate who don't know Shannon or know of Shannon. Her sterling reputation precedes her, as it should.

Shannon has been one of the most valuable members of my staff throughout my career. Those who know her are aware of her resounding work ethic, having spent countless late nights right here in the Senate and long weekends at the office. Not only has she been a trusted asset to me, but she has proved to be essential in our work here in the Senate to fund the government and our Nation's defense during my time in leadership on the Appropriations Committee.

Having grown up in North Carolina, Shannon is a proud graduate of Wake Forest University. She began her career on Capitol Hill as a staff assistant to freshman Representative Fred Heineman of North Carolina and then worked as a legislative assistant to Representative Lamar Smith of Texas.

I first met Shannon in 1999 when she applied for a job in the Senate with my staff. She joined my staff after experience in the House as a legislative assistant.

Shannon has served in many important roles on my senior staff, including my legislative director, which is a very important post, as the Presiding Officer knows; as chief of staff, which is an even more important post; senior policy adviser for the Senate Banking Committee when I was chairman of the Banking Committee; staff director of the Senate Rules Committee when I was chairman of the Rules Committee; and staff director of the Senate Appropriations Committee and its Defense Subcommittee.

Notably, she is, as you would know, the first female staff director for the full Senate Appropriations Committee—first female staff director of the Senate Appropriations Committee—something she was humbly unaware of until it was mentioned by a former colleague.

When I first took over as chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee a number of years back, Shannon was able to lead the committee in moving the most appropriations bills, with the help of everybody in the Senate, in 22 years in a bipartisan way. By the end of the fiscal year, 75 percent of the government was funded on time and through an open, bipartisan way. The Presiding Officer will remember; he was part of that.

Shannon's 27 years of service on Capitol Hill deserve the utmost recognition and praise, not just by me but I think a lot of us. She has earned my respect and the respect of countless others. I admire her for her valued commitment to her work and unending determination to get the job done.

Although I am sad to see her go, I remain grateful for her diligence, hard work, and guidance over the years. I wish Shannon all the best as she prepares for a new phase in her remarkable career in the private sector.

I can say without question that I would not have been able to accomplish what we have been able to do on the Appropriations Committee without her.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHATZ). Without objection, it is so ordered.

CHINA

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, since coming to the U.S. Senate over 3 years ago, I have regularly spoken about the dangers presented by communist China.

Last month, outside the Kennedy Caucus Room, I was joined by a group of pro-democracy activists from Hong Kong and advocates speaking out against the genocide in the Uighur homeland.

This month, as the Olympic Games have gone on in Beijing, we have seen the dangers that our athletes have faced. Athletes who have tested positive for COVID have been taken away by Chinese authorities, where they have been improperly fed. The FBI urged Team USA to leave their personal phones at home for fear of being surveilled by the Chinese Government and impacted by Chinese hackers.

Of course, we saw the dangers athletes face in communist China several months ago in the case of tennis star Peng Shuai. Peng is one of the most recognizable Chinese athletes. She is a three-time Olympian and was ranked the No. 1 doubles player in 2014 by the World Women's Tennis Association. She has won championships at Wimbledon and the French Open and has represented her country at the highest levels of tennis competition.

In November, when she shared her story of sexual abuse by a former Vice Premier of the Chinese Communist Party on social media, it rightfully caught the world's attention. Communist China's reaction to these disturbing allegations have shocked us all and completely verified all our fears.

Instead of taking Peng Shuai's claims seriously and investigating these allegations, the communist Chinese Government followed its authoritarian playbook: silence, deflect, and cover up. General Secretary Xi and his communist thugs are so thin-skinned, weak, and intolerant of any questioning of their conduct that the government immediately silenced and disappeared Peng.

People around the world asked on social media: "Where is Peng?" Chinese state media released what it said was an email from Peng to the Women's Tennis Association contradicting her previous allegations. It read like a hostage note and only raised more concerns as to her whereabouts and safety. Then Beijing shared a couple of videos of Peng at various structured public events and staged several video calls with the International Olympic Committee. The IOC didn't ask about her disappearance; they didn't ask about her allegations of abuse. And in the months since, the IOC has worked hand-in-hand with communist China to cover up Peng's allegations.

In the days after the Olympic opening ceremony, the IOC worked with Chinese officials to publish a highly controlled interview of Peng in a French sports magazine. In answers that were translated by a Chinese official, Peng announced her retirement from professional tennis and denied the previous claim she was assaulted. It was disturbing. And the fact that the IOC helped coordinate the interview shows Thomas Bach is willing to prioritize his relationship with communist China over the safety of athletes.

Compare their response to the World Tennis Association. At the beginning of December, the WTA announced it would be suspending all its tournaments in communist China until it was clear that Peng Shuai was safe and in good health and until there was a completely transparent investigation into her allegations of assault. It is a stark contrast between two organizations meant to protect the athletes—one aiding in the censorship and oppression of athletes, while the other does the right thing.

And now, you have a well-known pundit representing the Chinese Communist Party spouting gross and demeaning comments about Peng. On "60 Minutes Australia," Victor Gao, the vice president for the Center for China and Globalization and former translator for Deng Xiaoping, argued Peng could not have been assaulted because she is strong and athletic, so she should be able to defend herself. Can you imagine even saying that? The

Chinese Communist Party is saying that there is no way Peng could have been assaulted, so you better stop talking about this issue.

Well, I am not going to stop talking about this issue, and I am not going to let comments like that slide by. That is why I have introduced a bipartisan resolution with my colleague from Virginia rebuking the IOC for its failure to clearly and forcefully challenge the Party's claims about Peng Shuai's safety. The same resolution was unanimously adopted by the House of Representatives in December, and it is crucial that the Senate do the same.

My colleague from Virginia, Senator WARNER, is joining me to lead this resolution, along with 14 of our colleagues from both sides of the aisle. I am glad that my colleague from New Jersey, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has committed to mark up and favorably report this important resolution in the committee next month. I look forward to seeing its passage there and swiftly bringing it to the floor.

The United States is the leading voice of freedom and democracy around the world. We cannot tolerate this kind of behavior. Today, my colleagues and I are standing together for human rights.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded the call the roll.

Mr. KING. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. KING. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session and consider the following nominations en bloc: Calendar No. 599 and Calendar No. 693; that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc without intervening action or debate; that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that any statements related to the nominations be printed in the RECORD; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. HAWLEY. Mr. President, I object, and will submit a statement for the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

Mr. KING. Senator, are you up for a question? Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. President, I would like to direct a question through the Chair to the Senator from Indiana and ask the reason for his objection.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the Senator from Missouri yield?

Mr. KING. Mr. President, do I get a response from the Senator from Indiana?

Mr. President, we have two qualified nominees, reported out on a bipartisan basis by the Armed Services Committee at a moment of heightened international tension.

The Senator from Missouri—I said Indiana—I say the Senator from Missouri objected with no reason whatsoever. I asked him for his reasoning, and he did not respond; he walked out of the room.

I don't understand such an irresponsible action. This is a matter of national security. We have no reason for this objection. I understand that he is objecting to all nominees at the Department of Defense because he is upset about accountability for the withdrawal from Afghanistan.

We have taken action to deal with that question. In the National Defense Authorization Act that we just passed, there was a Commission created expressly to examine the issue of Afghanistan—how we got in, why we got in, what we did, how we left—on a bipartisan basis. I believe that was reported out by the committee unanimously in the National Defense Authorization Act after the committee's markup. So that is accountability.

In addition, the Armed Services and Intelligence Committees, which I also serve on, had at least 10—I think it was more like a dozen—hearings on the withdrawal from Afghanistan in the latter part of 2021, before the end of the year—a dozen hearings.

I was going to ask the Senator from Missouri how many hearings were held when he was a member of the Armed Services Committee and his party was in charge of the committee, how many hearings were held on President Trump's agreement to leave Afghanistan in Doha in February of 2020. That was the decision that led to President Biden effectuating the treaty—not the treaty but the agreement that the Trump administration had made with the Taliban that led to the evacuation of Americans and American troops from Afghanistan.

You know how many hearings were held by the Armed Services Committee on the Doha agreement, which was effectively guaranteeing we would leave Afghanistan with some minor conditions? Zero. Zero. Talk about accountability. There were no hearings or discussion in the committee that I can recall of the Doha agreement, where the Trump administration agreed with the Taliban that we would leave by May 1 of 2021, as long as the Taliban didn't attack our troops.

And now the Senator from Missouri is holding up nominees because of some—he doesn't like the way the evacuation occurred or he wants more questions from the Secretary of Defense.

We had hearings over and over. And what is going on here is a compromise

of national security because the Senator from Missouri has questions that, I guess, haven't been answered, although I believe he was at those hearings, had the opportunity to examine and cross-examine the Secretary of Defense and other officials of the Biden administration.

But here we are, at a moment of national tension—and that is putting it mildly—with nominees who are in charge of space and readiness. The Senator from Missouri today blocked consideration and confirmation of an Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness and for Space, two areas of critical national concern, for reasons that he wouldn't say. He walked out of the room. He walked out of the room. That is not accountability.

If you are going to do something that endangers national defense and block nominees who have been reported out by the committee on a bipartisan basis, accountability is standing in this room and telling the American people why he is doing it. Accountability means being responsible for your actions, not saying "I object" and then walking out, and that is what happened just now on this floor. I have never seen anything like it.

These are well-qualified nominations, reported out by the committee on a bipartisan basis, and we need them in these jobs. We need them now, today, in these jobs, and now that is not going to be possible because one Senator, for reasons that he refused to explain or expand upon, objected. That is not responsible. That is not responsible. That is endangering national security.

And to do so without any explanation is just, I believe, not appropriate for a Member of this body.

So we will renew these requests at a later date and hope that the Senator will have thought better of this action and allow these nominations to go forward as requested by a bipartisan majority of the Armed Services Committee.

I yield the floor.

Mr. HAWLEY. Mr. President, it is now February. It has been nearly 6 months since the disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Thirteen servicemembers lost their lives in the attack on Abbey Gate, along with hundreds of civilians. As a result of the botched evacuation operation, hundreds, if not thousands, of American civilians were left behind to the enemy.

We hear from our friends on the other side of the aisle that my insistence that we actually vote on nominees is unprecedented. I would humbly suggest that the crisis into which this President has led this country is unprecedented. In my lifetime, it is unprecedented.

And who has been held accountable for this disaster? No one. Who has the President fired? Who has offered their resignation? Which of the planners at the Department of State or the Department of Defense or the National Security

Council have been relieved of duty? No one.

Until there is accountability, I am going to ask that the Senate do the simple task of its job, which is to actually vote on these nominees. The least we could do is observe regular order and vote on these leadership positions at the Department of State and at the Department of Defense.

My colleagues say that we have got to put national security first. I agree with them about that. But I believe that begins at the top, with the President of the United States and the leadership of the Department of Defense and the Department of State. I, for one, am not going to stand by and look the other way while this administration systematically endangers our national security, imperils the American people, and watches the sacrifice of our soldiers go by without any accountability, without any change in direction.

Accountability for the Afghanistan disaster is all the more urgent given new revelations from the U.S. Central Command investigation of the Abbey Gate bombing. The investigative report makes clear that the administration had ample warning prior to mid-August that Kabul could collapse rapidly in the face of the Taliban's offensive. It shows further how the administration refused to acknowledge those warnings and act in a timely manner to prepare for Kabul's fall. And it shows in astounding detail just how chaotic the final evacuation effort was, with U.S. servicemembers often left without clear guidance, the State Department constantly missing in action, and the administration itself intent only on evacuating as many people as possible, regardless of whether those individuals were eligible for evacuation or might pose a threat to America's own security.

I am not willing to look the other way and just pretend that Afghanistan didn't happen, which seems to be the posture that many in this body have adopted. I am not willing to do that. I can't do that because I promised the parents of the fallen that I wouldn't do that.

I am going to discharge my responsibility. And as long as it takes, I will continue to draw attention to what happened at Abbey Gate and to demand accountability for the disaster that this administration has pushed upon this country and upon the people of my State.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

H.R. 6617

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I had just spoken about this, but it is imperative that we take up and pass H.R. 6617; that is the Further Additional Extending Government Funding Act. Of course, we call it the CR.

I say this because the bill will keep the Federal Government funded and fully operating through March 11, while we work out and are working out

the details of full-year appropriations bills to meet the needs of the American people.

And I want to compliment the Appropriations Committee staff who have been meeting with me and others week-ends, evenings, for weeks and months now, actually, to get this done.

In a few moments we will vote to invoke cloture on the motion to proceed to the continuing resolution. As chairman of the Appropriations Committee, I strongly urge all Members, Republicans and Democrats alike, to vote aye.

A government shutdown would be useless, senseless. Imagine how that would look to the Russians?

I am pleased to report that last week the four corners of the Senate House Appropriations Committee reached a framework agreement that will allow us to negotiate an omnibus appropriations bill. And that framework was the result of weeks of careful negotiations between myself, Vice Chairman SHELBY, Chair DELAUNO and Ranking Member GRANGER, and I want to thank them. I especially want to thank all their staffs who worked late nights and weekends that it took us to get to this point.

I don't know how many nights I probably turned in about 11 o'clock at night and I still was getting emails from them working on this.

Now, it is like any compromise. I have been here 48 years. I know you have to work these things out. I don't believe any of us walked away from these negotiations with everything we wanted. There is still much work to do. But on the good part, this framework sets the stage for us to make significant investments to the American people and communities across our country.

It provides the biggest increase in nondefense programs in 4 years. Under this framework, we can direct new resources. We can improve healthcare in rural communities. We can expand the middle class. We can protect our national security. And we look forward to presenting our final agreement to Members to review in the coming weeks.

But by passing this continuing resolution, we remove the unnecessary threat of yet another government shutdown and allow the Appropriations Committee to continue to work right through the upcoming recess. Because think of the alternative: a full year continuing resolution? That is untenable. It is far too onerous on the American people. Our government is not meant to run on autopilot; and American taxpayer dollars should not be spent on outdated priorities. We have the responsibility to make the hard choices about how to invest in the American people.

I will give you an example. A full-year continuing resolution would freeze funding at the National Institutes of Health. Think what that does. Think what that does when it brings

groundbreaking medical research to a halt at the time of a pandemic. It would once again pass on new investments that begin to acknowledge the climate crisis after 4 years of setting it on the back burner.

The continuing resolution would fail to increase investments in the education of our Nation's children or to build and renovate affordable housing or expand the middle class.

It would also—and this, people overlook—it would substantially reduce infrastructure spending that was in that bipartisan infrastructure law. We passed this bipartisan infrastructure law with an overwhelming vote, but we also have to fund it. A full-year, continuing resolution would lead to delays and, frankly, worse, a loss of service to veterans.

To draft the full-year appropriations bill allows us to make smart decisions on how to invest in each of these areas on behalf of the American people.

In December, the Secretary of Defense warned that a full-year CR would be unprecedented. It would cause irreparable damage to a wide range of bipartisan priorities from defense modernization to public health. Well, Secretary Austin is absolutely right.

A full-year continuing resolution would actually cut defense spending below last year's level. Some programs would be underfunded; others would be overfunded. And the Department of Defense would lack the transfer authority to correct the imbalance, yet the worst of all possible worlds.

To give an example, a continuing resolution would provide \$3.3 billion for training and arming the Afghan security forces. If anybody has been watching the press, the Afghan security forces aren't there anymore, but continuing the resolution would provide them \$3.3 billion more. Another example is the Department of Defense might have to lay off some of the men and women in the Armed Forces so they can afford a 2.7 percent pay raise which they rightly deserve that went into effect last month. So they would say: OK. Here is the pay raise, but we have to fire you all to pay for it because we have a continuing resolution. In other words, the continuing resolution would be paying to train a military force that doesn't even exist anymore, while laying off our own troops and civilian workforce in order to pay them.

Well, my talking points say this would not make sense. It is actually baloney to try to do this.

Funding the priorities of yesterday in the world of today would be irresponsible and is no way to govern.

Our four-corners framework provides a path for reaching a bipartisan, bicameral omnibus agreement by March 11. Vice Chairman SHELBY, Chairman DeLAURO and Ranking Member GRANGER and I are committed to completing this work. We and our staffs are willing to work straight through until that day. So I urge Members to support the continuing resolution that passed

the House with strong bipartisan—Republican and Democrats alike—support so we can finish our negotiation.

And I might say, Mr. President, the continuing resolution—and I was here at a time when something like this was typically passed by a voice vote. But it has to pass in its current form. The House is out of session. We don't have time for a long and protracted debate. The government will shut down at midnight tomorrow if we do not sign the continuing resolution in its current form to the President for his signature.

So I would urge all Members to oppose any amendments—whether they come from Republicans or Democrats—oppose any amendments to the bill and vote yes on the final passage. Be responsible. If we have to be in tonight and tomorrow to finish it, fine. But let's get it done. Come on.

If you took a poll of the American people, 95 percent of them would say: What is taking so long? Let's get it done.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. President, if there is nobody else seeking recognition, I ask the previously scheduled vote begin now.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 267, H.R. 6617, a bill making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2022, and for other purposes.

Charles E. Schumer, Patrick J. Leahy, Gary C. Peters, Jacky Rosen, Amy Klobuchar, Tammy Duckworth, Tina Smith, Tammy Baldwin, Jeff Merkley, Sheldon Whitehouse, Christopher A. Coons, Brian Schatz, Jon Tester, Jon Ossoff, Benjamin L. Cardin, Jack Reed, Tim Kaine, Alex Padilla.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the motion to proceed to H.R. 6617, a bill making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2022, and for other purposes, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. KELLY) and the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. LUJÁN) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR) and

the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 65, nays 30, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 60 Leg.]

YEAS—65

Baldwin	Heinrich	Reed
Barrasso	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Bennet	Hirono	Rounds
Blumenthal	Hyde-Smith	Rubio
Blunt	Kaine	Sanders
Booker	Kennedy	Schatz
Brown	King	Schumer
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Capito	Leahy	Shelby
Cardin	Manchin	Sinema
Carper	Markey	Smith
Casey	McConnell	Stabenow
Cassidy	Menendez	Tester
Collins	Merkley	Tillis
Coons	Moran	Van Hollen
Cornyn	Murkowski	Warner
Cortez Masto	Murphy	Warnock
Duckworth	Murray	Warren
Durbin	Ossoff	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Padilla	Wicker
Hagerty	Peters	Wyden
Hassan	Portman	

NAYS—30

Blackburn	Grassley	Risch
Boozman	Hawley	Romney
Braun	Hoeven	Sasse
Cotton	Inhofe	Scott (FL)
Cramer	Johnson	Scott (SC)
Crapo	Lankford	Sullivan
Cruz	Lee	Thune
Daines	Lummis	Toomey
Ernst	Marshall	Tuberville
Fischer	Paul	Young

NOT VOTING—5

Burr	Graham	Luján
Feinstein	Kelly	

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KING). On this vote, the yeas are 65, the nays are 30.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion is agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

UKRAINE

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, in November of 2017, I spent some time in western Ukraine, sitting down to be able to have a meal and be able to talk to a group of Oklahomans from the 45th Infantry of the Oklahoma National Guard. Some had been in Ukraine since January of that year, and they were still there in November. They spent the entire year in 2017—the Oklahoma National Guard—training the military of the Ukrainians. Why? Because Russians, in 2014, had moved into Crimea and had crossed the border into the eastern part of Ukraine in what is called the Donbas and taken over two different areas that—they said there were separatists that were doing it. They were Russian speakers, so they clearly should be under Russian domination. And they moved in.

It was an entire year that Oklahomans spent with Ukrainians developing friendships, training them, preparing them for battle against a very large Army in the Russians. They hoped to be able to push the Russians out of the eastern side of their country.

And as we sat and visited and talked, they told me about the tenacity of the Ukrainian fighters, their commitment to their families, and their commitment to be able to be independent, to

be a separate functioning democracy, to engage with the rest of the world as any independent sovereign nation would choose to be able to do. That was 2017.

To Oklahomans, this conversation about Ukraine and the Russians surrounding Ukraine on three sides is not theory. Some Oklahomans know the names of Ukrainians that are currently on those front lines. They served alongside of each other, and they have stayed in contact, calling them friends. If you go into the Ukrainian Embassy today for the United States, you will see a picture of some Oklahomans up on the wall because they remember that group of Oklahomans that came to Ukraine to help them prepare for a day they hoped would never come and to be able to be ready to push the Russians out of the eastern part of their nation.

But today—literally, right now—Ukrainians living on the border, especially in the north, can literally hear the sound of Russian artillery practicing just miles away. They have been able to hear that sound for days and days now as they do live fire exercises just on the other side of the border. They are seeing that the Russians have amassed well in excess of 100,000 troops. They gathered troops from Russia from the far east next to their border with China and had moved them all the way to the west to be able to surround Ukraine on three sides with naval forces and with ground forces.

They are very aware the Russians have moved their special operations. They moved in field hospitals. They are very aware they are doing live training exercises in preparation. They hope that it is only saber-rattling, but they hear the sound of the guns just a few miles away.

Since hearing from the Russian perspective, even within the last 24 hours, the Russian diplomats have spoken to the BBC just in the last few hours. And they spoke and said they have no intention of any aggressive moves, that they are a sovereign nation and that they can move their forces anywhere they want to be able to move on any inch of their land, and if they want to put their forces all right there along the border with Ukraine, that is their sovereign right to do that.

And then they replied back in what must be one of the great Russian statements of all time: that the West is not reporting that the Ukrainians have also moved 100,000 troops next to the border with Russia. They must think the entire world is delusional. A Russian diplomat called it “myth” that the Russians intend to do aggression and said they would only move into Ukraine if they were provoked.

Now, mind you, U.S. intelligence released publicly just a few days ago a plot the Russians had, that they already created a film—a movie, if I can say it that way, a newsreel—that they had staged a Ukrainian attack on Russians, and it laid out actors that

looked as if they were dead and set up all of these Ukrainian implements from war and these different vehicles surrounding burned-out Russian tanks so they could show the world that Ukrainians actually attacked them first, except our intelligence actually exposed that plan. But the Russians are still repeating over and over again that they will only attack if they are provoked, as they work to be able to stage a provocation.

People forget in the world that when the Russians are in Belarus, they are a half-day drive from Kyiv, but they are also a half-day drive from where they are stationed right now from Warsaw.

This is a tenuous time. This is not a new moment for the Russians to act aggressively toward their neighbors. In 2008, Russia invaded the country of Georgia. In 2014, as I mentioned, Russia annexed Crimea and moved in. In 2014, they also moved into the Donbas region. During that time in 2014, Russians—in July of 2014, the Russian 53rd Anti-Aircraft Brigade launched an anti-aircraft weapon against MH17, a passenger aircraft flying from Amsterdam to Malaysia—not even coming to Ukraine. They launched an anti-aircraft weapon against that flight flying over Ukraine, and the Russians murdered 298 people because they flew over an area that they were working to be able to overtake.

It is clear, the Russians, in their aggression, and Putin, in his attempt to make sure the whole world pays attention to him and shows that he is a powerful man because he can round up the entire world to be able to look at him when his economy is literally in tatters—Russia's gross domestic product for the entire country is smaller than the State of Texas's gross domestic product. Yet, with his nuclear weapons and disproportionate allocation to his military and his control of oil and gas in the region, he continues to be able to saber-rattle and force the world to be able to look at him, the whole while declaring that he is a sovereign and he can move troops anywhere he wants to move. But also, by the way, Ukraine is not sovereign enough to make a decision about their own defense, demanding that Ukraine never become a member of NATO.

Can I remind the world, NATO is a defensive alliance—a defensive alliance. The NATO alliance exists—and it is an incredibly successful alliance—the NATO alliance exists to be able to react if they are attacked. NATO does not cooperate in attacking anyone. NATO is set up to defend each other when attacked. Ukraine is not a NATO nation, but NATO nations surround Ukraine. And we are all extremely aware of Putin's focus on trying to be able to push out and to recreate the USSR again.

We should pay attention. We should not pretend this won't affect the world. We have seen oil prices around the world already accelerate based on just Putin's actions right now. We have

seen that he is trying to be able to manipulate oil prices for the benefit of Russia but to the detriment of everyone else. We can see that.

The issue is, what are we going to do about that? How are we going to actually engage? Well, our Nation has given over \$400 million in assistance to Ukraine every year since 2014, including this year—\$464 million in assistance to Ukraine. As I mentioned before, Oklahomans and multiple others have gone to Ukraine and been able to train their military for them to be able to defend themselves. We have assisted the Ukrainian people with counter-artillery radars, coastal defensive implements, geospatial intelligence, counterunmanned aerial system equipment, electronic warfare, demining equipment, small arms—we have tried to be able to help the Ukrainians defend themselves.

We need to also speak with a unified voice that if Russia decides they are going to move across that border into Ukraine, that there are strong, unrelenting sanctions coming on that nation and that economy that is smaller than the economy of Texas; that we are keenly aware of how they survive based on oil and gas sales; and we are well-prepared to be able to fill in the supply from other nations that are buying from Russia; that they would be welcome to be able to buy from us or from any other nation ready to be able to sell to them; to be able to supplant what Russia is choosing to do; to be able to use energy as a leverage point on every country in the region to say: Don't respond or we will cut off your energy.

We need to make it very clear that the world stands with the free people of Ukraine and we will bring severe consequences on the economy of Russia that will be long-lasting—not only primary sanctions, but secondary sanctions. In other words, if individuals choose to be able to do business with Russia, they have to choose: They can either do business with Russia or do business with the United States of America. You can't do both. You have to pick.

With the largest economy in the world, I believe most would rather work with a free market, a free nation, than to be able to work with an unstable Russia.

But we should be clear. Russia has gone back on its words in the Minsk Agreement. Russia has gone back on its word on multiple different treaty agreements. We cannot trust what they say, but they should be able to trust what we will do if they choose to attack the free people of Ukraine.

Let me just say this: I firmly believe that the best thing that we can do is to work to keep a war from ever starting rather than engage and try to stop it once it starts. We should speak clearly as a nation. We should speak clearly from the administration. We should speak clearly from Congress with a unified, nonpartisan voice that the people of the United States want to do

what it takes to keep a war from starting so that Europe doesn't see yet another land war. That is going to take focus from this body.

So what do we need to do? We should make the clear offer that we will provide energy to the rest of the world, that if Russia cuts them off, we will rapidly move to be able to fill the gap. We should make it clear about our primary and secondary sanctions. We should make it clear on diplomatic channels and in public what we will do. We should continue to be able to work with our allies to be able to build a strong coalition and to reaffirm the NATO alliances there. We should continue to be able to make it very clear to Russia that if they choose to be able to move into Ukraine, it would be not only economically disastrous, but NATO is well prepared to be able to defend our alliance. And we should stand with the people of Ukraine and continue to equip them as they work to be able to protect themselves.

The people of Ukraine, in the times that I have been there—and I have been there several times—the people of Ukraine will be glad to be able to drive you through Kyiv and point out the places where they fought for their independence. They are a proud people. They do not want the Russians taking over their country. And they have fought for their independence once, and they are prepared to fight for it again. They should know we are prepared to stand next to them.

Let's pray for the people of Ukraine who, right now, hear the guns practicing on the other side of their border. Let's pray for peace, but let's also do the work to build the groundwork for peace, as well.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. VAN HOLLEN). The Senator from Wyoming is recognized.

CRIME

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to talk about the crime wave that has hit our country and specifically hit Democratic-run cities. Over the last 20 months, Democrats have aided and abetted the most dramatic surge in violent crime in American history.

In the summer of 2020, leftwing mobs burned cities like Minneapolis and Portland, OR. Democratic mayors and Governors genuflected to the mob. They started a movement to defund the police in this country. Bill de Blasio in New York cut funding for the New York City Police Department by \$1 billion. The Los Angeles City Council voted to cut funding by over \$150 million.

Nearly two dozen other cities followed suit, each of them run by a liberal mayor. What followed was a historic exodus from police departments all across the country. Police retirements skyrocketed; resignations increased dramatically among police officers; and recruitment of new officers became almost impossible.

Thanks to the Democratic politicians who have run these cities, our cities have fewer police. Our police have lower morale, and these communities have higher crime.

In 2020, there was a 30-percent increase in the murder rate nationwide—the fastest increase in American history.

In 2021, the murder rate went up even higher. Sixteen cities broke their all-time records for homicide, and, of course, all 16 were run by liberal Democrats. Of course, these included the cities that defunded the police. Austin, TX, defunded the police, and the murder rate there doubled.

Last year, the national murder rate reached its highest level in 25 years. So far, 2022 looks like it may be even worse. So what are the Democrats doing about it? They have the House, they have the Senate, and they have the White House. They are doing two things: They are making it worse, and they are trying to avoid being blamed for what they are causing.

How are they making it worse? Well, just take a look at some of the nominees of President Joe Biden, people he has put in high positions in the Justice Department—radical liberals. Every Member of the Democrat body in this institution voted to confirm them. These are people who hold beliefs way out of the mainstream of the American people when it comes to their service for the Department of Justice. Joe Biden has essentially handed over Justice Department leadership to radical activists who want to defund the police. They are the people running the Justice Department. Every single Democrat voted to confirm them.

The people of America were shocked to learn that last March, Democrats, on a straight party-line vote—every Republican against; every Democrat for—gave almost \$1 billion in stimulus checks to 645,000 convicted criminals. These are people either still behind bars or recently released.

Senator TOM COTTON, the junior Senator from Arkansas, and I introduced an amendment to block them from getting stimulus checks. Every Democrat in the Senate voted to block our amendment. In effect, they voted to subsidize criminals, convicted criminals. With Democrats in charge in America, criminals have hit the jackpot.

The second thing the Democrats are trying to do is to try to avoid getting blamed for this incredible spike in violent crime.

Joe Biden recently went to the majority leader's hometown, New York City.

Right now, there is a crimewave in New York City, and it is on the rise. Crime is up 40 percent in New York City so far this year; car thefts are almost double.

Joe Biden went to New York to meet with the mayor, Eric Adams. Now, of course, Mayor Adams is a former police officer and an opponent of the Demo-

crat mantra of defunding the police. So Joe Biden was obviously very interested in engaging and in getting his picture taken with the mayor of New York so that he could pretend to be tough on crime. Voters aren't buying it. The American people know that Joe Biden has supported leftwing radicals who support defunding the police.

There was a recent poll in New York. New Yorkers were asked if crime is a "very serious problem." Three out of four New Yorkers say it is. This is the most in the 20-year history of taking a poll and asking that question.

So crime is the worst now, in the minds of the people who live there in New York City, over the last 20 years.

Two-thirds of all voters say they disapprove of Joe Biden on the issue of crime. I mean, Biden's numbers are in the tank anyway. Only 40 percent of Americans support what he is doing. People think the country is heading in the wrong direction under Democrat leadership in the House and the Senate and the White House. But specifically in the area of crime, as well as in the areas of inflation and the border and others, Joe Biden's numbers drop even further. Two-thirds of all Americans disapprove of Joe Biden on the issue of crime.

While Joe Biden was in New York, he didn't say a word about the radical new district attorney, Alvin Bragg. District Attorney Bragg is another radical, leftwing prosecutor. What does that mean? Well, it is interesting, and I will get to that in a second. But who would support this district attorney? Oh, one of his top supporters for election was the majority leader of the U.S. Senate.

On District Attorney Bragg's first day in office—first day—he told the whole world he would not prosecute certain crimes. He didn't care if they were on the books or not, he wasn't going to prosecute them. In other words, a district attorney said he singlehandedly was going to legalize certain crimes in New York City. He told every criminal in New York that they could commit crimes, not be prosecuted, go home free. These crimes include trespassing, prostitution, and even resisting arrest.

Imagine being a police officer in New York City, where you know people aren't going to be prosecuted for resisting arrest, knowing resisting arrest was legal, according to the district attorney. It is no wonder so many officers are quitting, so many have retired, and why it is almost impossible to recruit.

We know what is causing today's Democrat crimewave: too few police, too many criminals walking free, and too few consequences for the criminals in Democrat cities and States. All of these are the result of Democrat liberal policies.

These are policies that the American people have continued to reject and reject again today. American people want the law to be enforced. They want prosecutors and judges who follow the

law as written. The American people are sick and tired of Democrats coddling criminals. The American people support the police.

It is long past time for the Democrats to reverse course. It is time to reverse these reckless Democrat policies before this Democrat crimewave gets even worse.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, the Presiding Officer from Maryland was in committee with me today and heard the President's Council of Economic Advisers talk about the economy, acknowledging that they spend every day worrying about inflation, what we do to combat inflation, everything from—we see the huge, excess profits in the shipping industry, among drug companies, food service companies—especially the meatpackers but also supermarket chains and oil companies. A big part of inflation we need to combat is because these companies understand they can raise prices because they don't have much competition. We see executive compensation continue to rise, sometimes to stratospheric levels. Who bears the burden? The burden is on middle-class and lower income families in places like Baltimore and Cleveland and places like western Maryland and southeast Ohio. And we know what we need to do.

We also know from our work in this committee that the Federal Reserve's job is to make sure that—they are the principal group in Washington, in the government, to combat inflation, the Federal Reserve. The Federal Reserve has three vacancies and has two other nominees who are Acting Federal Reserve Governors, and we need to confirm them.

Five nominations came in front of our committee last Tuesday—5 nominations—and because of peculiar Senate rules, we couldn't act because all 12 Republicans boycotted the committee. They boycotted the committee because one of the nominees from the Presiding Officer's home State, Sarah Bloom Raskin, even though she answered 189 questions—questions in the committee and then 189 written questions; majority from Republicans—she answered them all in 48 hours. She shouldn't have gotten even more questions. She has met with every Senator of either party, on the committee or off the committee, who wanted to meet with her. She has done everything that they ask of her. Yet they don't like her answers. They don't like that she believes the government has to deal with climate change. They don't like that she

is going to stand up to Wall Street. So instead of just going to the committee and doing their job, voting against her, they boycotted the committee so we couldn't vote on the nomination.

So five jobs, five Governors of the Federal Reserve just sit in limbo because Republicans aren't doing their jobs. You come here, and you vote yes or you vote no. You don't vote "I am not going to show up because I don't like this. I am going to boycott this meeting."

It simply says that Republicans have been AWOL in the fight against inflation because we need these Fed Governors in place. We need them fighting against inflation. And for Republicans to just say "Sorry; we are not going to go" is simply bailing out and not doing their job. They are being AWOL in combating inflation. It is wrong for our country and wrong for our economy.

We in the majority put workers at the center of our economy, workers at the center of our economic policy. We will continue to. Republicans need to show up and—just show up and do their jobs. Vote no if you want, but show up and do your jobs.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

FREE SPEECH

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I was surprised to learn that Facebook recently flagged a news article that I posted on my Facebook pages as "false information." The article I posted was about new Durham investigation allegations against Hillary Clinton's campaign and its associates. The article clearly cited a Federal court filing and a former congressional investigator with a deep understanding of the Democrats' work to concoct the bogus Russia collusion narrative that divided our Nation for years.

This wouldn't be an issue today if more journalists did their job of being the police of our society and governmental system and reported on all investigations, not just ones that appeal to certain political parties.

What kind of a message does this censorship send to a reporter who does take on the new allegations against the Clinton campaign and its associates and then it is labeled "disinformation"? I don't think that is going to encourage more journalists to cover this issue.

It is truly mind-blowing that these companies continue to interfere in free expression. Big Tech is silencing everyone they disagree with, and clearly they see no check to their powers. The article I cited—I cited two in my post—was on foxnews.com, a mainstream news organization.

Why does Facebook and one of its third-party fact-checker partners get to make the decision that this news article is considered false information? That decision should be made by the American people who should be able to view that content and decide that fact for themselves. It shouldn't be decided by our Big Tech overlords who seem to only find fault with content that is conservative or goes against the liberal narrative.

These are the same outlets that allowed information relating to the Steele dossier to run wild and very free, yet censored Hunter Biden's news articles during the 2020 election.

Now they are doing the bidding for the Clinton camp. Why are they so afraid of reporting that exposes the Russian collusion hoax? Silencing or chilling free speech and the back-and-forth discussion of ideas is entirely wrong. Increasingly, we see the tag "misinformation" or "disinformation" given to content that the liberal mainstream media simply disagrees with or goes against their chosen narrative. Finding and seeking the truth should not be about silencing voices but allowing robust discourse.

It is time that we examine the section 230 immunity that has enabled these companies to avoid any liability. We must stop these companies from arbitrarily deciding what speech is acceptable for this free country we live in. It has become increasingly clear that these dominant platforms controlling discussion and dialogue are more beholden to cancel culture and not to the fundamentals of free speech principles that this country was founded upon.

These Big Tech companies have few competitors and are immune from liability. These companies are unaccountable to their customers, the courts, and the government. If not for their monopoly power and section 230 immunity, these companies might not be involved in the actions and censorship that we see today.

As a U.S. Senator and someone who has been vocally outspoken about my concerns with censorship on online platforms, I will continue to do everything in my power to prevent the censorship of speech and ideas on behalf of my constituents in Iowa and of course on all Americans. Simply put, we deserve better than "woke" monopolists and their liberal lapdogs deciding what we can discuss.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 3614

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I rise today to urge my colleagues—I think they are all going to do this—to support S. 3614. That is the United States-Russian Federation Seafood Reciprocity Act of 2022, a pretty simple bill that will require reciprocity between Russia and the United States of America as it relates to our seafood industry and seafood trade.

Now, let me give you a little bit of background on this because it actually relates to what is going on in the world today. All eyes are currently on the Russian aggression toward Ukraine right now and for good reason. We have seen the stories that the authoritarian dictator Vladimir Putin is going to invade Ukraine. We hope, and I think every one of us hopes, that doesn't happen, but it is looking like it may.

But what is less talked about is the last time there was an invasion by Russia of Ukraine, what ended up happening in terms of sanctions and, in particular, American seafood sanctions, and the ramifications of the last Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Here is what actually happened. In 2014, when Putin invaded the Crimean Peninsula and eastern Ukraine, President Obama put sanctions on Russia. Now, I wasn't here as a Senator then, but I supported them. Russia then retaliated in terms of sanctions in 2014, and here is one of the things they did. They banned all seafood exports from America—whether it is Alaska, Massachusetts—into Russia. So that was about 9 years ago. That ban still exists today.

Let me repeat this. If you are a big fisherman in Massachusetts or the great State of Alaska, as the Senator from Massachusetts knows, we both have thousands of great fishermen, you cannot export one fish to Russia. Nine years of a ban, and guess what. The United States lets Russia's seafood into America almost duty-free.

Let me repeat that. A ban on American exports to Russia, a 9-year blockade, not one Massachusetts fisherman or Alaskan fisherman can export his great American seafood product to Russia. Russia gets to import Russian seafood into America duty-free. That is called unfair by any measure—by any measure. And it certainly is unfair to the great fishermen of my State as well as the fishermen of Massachusetts.

Now, I have talked about Alaskan fishermen for—well, as long as I have been a Senator. About 66 percent of all seafood harvested in the United States comes from the great State of Alaska. So we are big exporters.

What has happened, though, in this regard, is that as we export—we Alaskans, fishermen from Massachusetts—as we export seafood around the world, we have not been able to export anything in that market, the Russian market, for 9 years, and at the same time the value of Russian seafood imported into the United States—surprise—has skyrocketed because there is no tariff on it. It skyrocketed 173 percent since 2013. That was the year before the embargo was imposed—again, directly competing against American seafood producers, American fishermen.

As a matter of fact, the Russians are actually starting to steal market share from American fishermen, whether Massachusetts or Alaska, and we are talking hundreds of millions of dollars. This is unfair by anybody's definition.

So my bill is very simple. It says, like we need in all trade around the world, we need just straight-up reciprocity. Right now, we can't export a thing to Russia, and they export their fish to America duty-free.

So the bill is simple. It just says, until we can export into the Russian market, they shouldn't be able to export into our market.

I can't imagine any U.S. Senator objecting to this. It is called reciprocity. It is called fairness. And it is righting a wrong that has been in the works for 9 years now, whether you are a fisherman in Massachusetts or a fisherman in Alaska.

I have raised this issue with the Obama administration, the Trump administration, now the Biden administration. We are still waiting on reciprocity. So it is time to act. The U.S. Senate can act, and I am hopeful that we are going to act on this today. As a matter of fact, I checked with all my Republican colleagues, and every single one of them is supportive of basic reciprocity for fishermen.

So, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Finance Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. 3614 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; further, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO). Is there objection?

Mr. MARKEY. Reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. Madam President, I just want to say that I sincerely respect the Senator from Alaska's concerns about the Russian seafood imports, and I believe it is unfair. I believe it is improper that Russia has banned American seafood imports since 2014. So I agree with you. And Alaska and Massachusetts are the two fishing giants of the United States of America. We are.

However, I have heard from seafood processors in my home State with concerns about potential sudden effects of a new immediate ban on imports on their workforce, including hundreds of union workers in the seafood processing industry. That would be right now.

So, with that in mind, I am going to object to passage of this bill at this time, but I would say to my friend from Alaska that I would invite a collaboration on this subject because I think we can resolve it so that it benefits not just Alaska, which is very important, but also Massachusetts and every other State. And, again, I think we can, in fact, bring all the stakeholders together, do it very briefly maybe over this break that we are about to begin here in the Senate.

I am very grateful to the Senator from Alaska for raising this very im-

portant issue, and I want to assure him and all of the Alaska fishing industry that we want to have conversations that protect the American seafood industry and its workers and I want to partner with him toward that goal and maybe just use the next 10 days or so to accomplish that goal. So at this point I would object to the motion.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Madam President, I appreciate my friend Senator MARKEY, his offer to work through this.

He and I have worked together on a number of issues, actually a number of issues particularly related to America's fishermen. As he mentioned, Massachusetts has a lot of fishermen, and I have tens of thousands of my fellow Alaskans involved in the industry. And, again, I think he and I certainly agree with this concept. I think every U.S. Senator agrees with the concept of basic fairness in trade, basic fairness, in terms of reciprocity, in trade—all trade but especially the seafood trade. We have had 9 years of no reciprocity from Russia—Putin, the thug. We shouldn't have to take it anymore, and it is hurting my constituents.

Now, my understanding of the issue raised by Senator MARKEY is that it is primarily Russian pollock that is imported into Massachusetts. As Senator MARKEY knows, in Alaska, we have a huge number of fishermen engaged in that fishery. So maybe what we should look at is making sure Massachusetts' workers are actually processing American—Alaskan—pollock, not the authoritarian pollock in Russia. That would be a fair way to resolve this.

I appreciate the offer to work together on this, but I will tell the Senator we need to work quickly because it has been 9 years of nonreciprocal seafood trade. I am almost certain that Massachusetts fishermen who once exported to Russia have been hurt by this seafood blockade as well as my fishermen. I take Senator MARKEY's offer and suggestion in good faith. Hopefully, we can work over the work period in the next couple of weeks and get to a result on this.

Alaskans will supply Massachusetts' workers pollock or cod or whatever you are processing, and then we will bring reciprocity in terms of trade, which currently does not exist, between Russia and the United States. It is wrong. It is unfair. It needs to be fixed by us, and it needs to be fixed by the Biden administration as well.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

NOMINATION OF MICHELE TAYLOR

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, in a bit, I hope to be able to put forward and pass a unanimous consent request, asking the Senate to take up and approve the nomination of Ms. Michele Taylor to serve as the U.S. Representative to the U.N. Human Rights Council, with the rank of Ambassador. Before I put that request forward, I want to

take just a few minutes to talk about why Ms. Taylor is, in my view, the right choice for this important role and why the Senate must act on her nomination quickly.

In blunt terms, Michele Taylor is simply a champion for fundamental human and political rights. She now serves on the board of the National Center for Civil and Human Rights. She has been a leader with other humanitarian groups, including the Anti-Defamation League and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Council. She has battled for the rights of women and other vulnerable Americans.

On a personal level, I come from a family who lost some relatives in the Holocaust. Ms. Taylor is the daughter of a Holocaust survivor. It is absolutely essential that fighting against the rise of anti-Semitism is a key part of America's diplomacy. Ms. Taylor certainly understands that.

I am confident she will work to lead our partners and allies toward a more peaceful, prosperous future, grounded in respect for human dignity.

In the Senate, there is bipartisan interest in ensuring that the United States stands up and battles for human rights around the world. For example, on the Finance Committee, Senator BROWN, Senator CRAPO, and I have put in a lot of hours in recent years to address the scourge of forced labor in China and elsewhere in the world. I know, also, that this is a subject that the President of the Senate cares deeply about. This is just one of the human rights atrocities that our country must stand up to forcefully.

The Senate must show that our concern for these issues is more than just idle talk. That is why the Senate must not delay the nominations of highly qualified individuals, like Ms. Michele Taylor, who are up for consideration in key roles in advancing human rights.

There is a matter of the sensitivity of the time as well. The regular session of the U.N. Human Rights Council begins on February 28, which is, obviously, just days away. It is essential, in my view, that we confirm our representative now. Delaying Ms. Taylor's confirmation simply hinders the United States' ability to advocate for American values and help vulnerable people who are suffering under abuse and oppression around the world.

Moving this nomination forward is an opportunity for the Senate to show this Chamber's commitment to advancing human rights is, in fact, more than just talk. There is a deadline—a specific, concrete deadline, February 28—that is bearing down on the Chamber. There simply is no more time to delay on this important nomination.

We await a colleague who would like to have a chance to be heard on this, to consider it. I do hope that we can work this out here in the afternoon. Hopefully, the Senate will wrap up business this afternoon because this really is time-sensitive.

Members talk about matters that actually may be coming up; this one is

upon us. I do hope that we will be able to clear Ms. Michele Taylor to serve as U.S. Representative to the U.N. Human Rights Council with the rank of Ambassador before the close of business today.

Thank you.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CHINA

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, the aggressive and hostile actions of the Chinese Communist Party pose a massive threat to the global order. The Chinese Communist Party's strategy can be summed up in four Rs: resist, reduce, replace, and reorder.

China resists American economic influence by manipulating American businesses and industries and stealing intellectual property.

It reduces internal dissent and free expression of ideas through surveillance and censorship of its own people. It is essentially a police state. And it seeks to assert its power and influence in the United States by various means.

The Chinese Communist Party intends to replace America as the world's technology leader through its Made in China 2025 initiative, which seeks to achieve Chinese dominance in high-tech manufacturing.

And, of course, it hopes to reorder international norms and institutions around itself.

The CCP's mantra can best be described as "Win at all costs." And, make no mistake, its reckless actions paint an alarming picture for the United States and our allies. For everything from national security to economic policy, there is a clear and urgent need to reorient our way of thinking on how we should respond to this threat from China.

Despite the partisanship that has sometimes gripped this Chamber for more than a year now, this is one area where, thankfully, there is broad bipartisan agreement. Our colleagues on both sides of the aisle recognize the growing threats posed by the CCP and the need to act.

So last summer the Senate took a major step forward by passing the U.S. Innovation and Competition Act. This bipartisan bill was the result of intense bipartisan negotiations, with our friend Senator YOUNG from Indiana leading negotiations on our side of the aisle. This legislation addresses a range of issues to help the United States reduce its reliance on China and to counter looming threats from the Communist Party.

Without question, the cornerstone of USICA, as it is called, is funding for programs created by the CHIPS Act, which I introduced with the Senator

from Virginia, Mr. WARNER, in 2020 and nearly every Senator in this body has supported. Semiconductor chips, which we have all had to learn a lot more about, are everywhere—from cell phones to cars to agricultural equipment to missile defense systems. Despite our need for a strong supply of these semiconductor chips, we overwhelmingly rely on other countries—most of them in Asia—to produce them. Taiwan alone produces about 63 percent of the advanced semiconductors in the world.

If, for some reason, our supply of these semiconductors was cut off as the result of a natural disaster or another pandemic or military conflict, it would lead to very serious consequences for both our national security as well as our economy. When we talk about the need to address threats to our supply chain and threats coming from the People's Republic of China, semiconductors are front and center.

Now, USICA provided the CHIPS program with \$52 billion to bolster domestic semiconductor manufacturing and to secure this vulnerable supply chain. This legislation passed the Senate last summer by a vote of 68 to 32, which is an incredible bipartisan accomplishment these days.

Unfortunately, the House of Representatives refused to act on this bipartisan bill. They said they wanted to pass their own version, which they have every right to do, of course, but they also should have been working at it diligently and acted quickly. The Chinese Communist Party simply isn't sitting around waiting on House Democrats to get their act together.

So it took 8 months before the House of Representatives passed a bill aimed at competition with China; but, unfortunately, they chose to go the easy way, which is to pass strictly a partisan bill, which virtually no Republican supported. Instead of mirroring the bipartisan process here in the Senate, Democrats only negotiated among themselves and excluded Republicans from that process.

Democratic committee chairmen refused to consult with their Republican ranking members, and they ran off with the pen and crafted a partisan and unserious bill. Sure, this legislation does include a few bipartisan measures like CHIPS funding, as well as a proposal I led with Mr. CASEY, the Senator from Pennsylvania, to review limited outbound investments in China.

But House Democrats don't deserve a lot of credit for including a few bipartisan bills that they already support. They kept some of the overwhelmingly partisan pieces of USICA and tacked on a laundry list of unrelated and controversial provisions. The House-passed bill sends a whopping \$8 billion to a U.N. climate slush fund, which has provided more than \$100 million to China alone. So if the purpose of this effort is to counter threats from China, it doesn't exactly accomplish that goal when we end up sending money to China.

Democrats also added provisions in the House related to immigration, from creating new types of visas to removing green card caps. Now, immigration is a serious and important issue, but these can't expect to see the light of day being haphazardly tacked on to this legislation. They need to be debated and marked up by the appropriate legislative committees and negotiated.

Well, in true fashion, House Democrats added a range of handouts to their political supporters, especially labor unions. From massive slush funds to burdensome new labor requirements, unions would win big with the House bill. The labor bosses apparently were promised some pretty big benefits in the Democrats' reckless tax-and-spending spree bill.

Since that bill is now dead and buried, it looks like this was their way to try to appease their political supporters.

As we have learned over the last year, our colleagues in the House can't seem to resist any opportunity to sneak in ridiculous partisan pet projects. Their bill would also establish a coral reef task force—you heard me correctly, a coral reef task force—and put \$6 million toward a national coral reef management fellowship. Believe it or not, the term “coral reef” is mentioned more than 300 times in the House bill. No wonder it took them so long to put the bill together.

Of course, it is not just what is in this bill that is a problem; it is what was left out. The bill's trade title—which was one of the most important parts of what the Senate did, championed by the Senator from Idaho, the ranking member of the Finance Committee, Mr. CRAPO—but the House trade bill is entirely inadequate. It extends and expands trade adjustment assistance, which is normally something we do when we approve of a trade deal, like the USMCA, the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement. But they left out the most important part, which was trade promotion authority.

We know trade promotion authority is absolutely critical to brokering strong trade agreements without extraordinary delays. What the House did by including trade adjustment assistance without trade promotion authority does nothing to advance our goals to open up markets to American-made goods and services and agriculture.

Well, the House bill also fails to push for a digital trade agreement and identify countries, like the People's Republic of China, that use censorship as a way to limit access to our tech industry, and it doesn't narrow relief from tariffs for businesses experiencing severe economic harm that has broad bipartisan support.

So it is no surprise that the House bill was passed almost entirely along party lines. Unlike the bipartisan legislation here in the Senate, the House bill is an unserious attempt to help America compete with China. It just simply doesn't cut the mustard.

House Democrats wasted about 8 months while they waited and waited and waited before even acting in this totally inadequate manner. And there is no chance, of course, the Senate will pass anything that resembles the House bill. We do need legislation to confront growing threats from China, but we need to do it correctly. That means what we need is a formal conference committee between the House and the Senate and to ensure ultimately that the final product looks a whole lot like the Senate bill, which passed, as I said, with strong bipartisan support.

This is really nothing to be toyed with. This is a matter of national and economic security and something far too important for partisan jockeying such as demonstrated by the House of Representatives in their totally inadequate and unserious piece of legislation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

INFLATION

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, we are about—at least many of us—ready to return home to our States and to visit with our constituents in person, and that is a common practice for me. I can indicate to my colleagues in the Senate that the conversations—they are wide-ranging at home, but certainly, if there is a theme, it is the consequences that Americans and Kansans are feeling in regard to inflation. The things at the grocery store, the price at the pump, rent—all those things are rising, and people are struggling to pay the bills. Things are being left out of what someone can afford in their budget because everything costs more.

Kansas is an energy-producing State. We certainly are an agricultural State. I would tell you, when I talk to farmers and ranchers, commodity prices have gone up. One might think that is something that would be very beneficial to farmers, but this inflation has raised the price of everything they purchase to create the crops that feed us across America and around the world.

One of the components and one of the reasons that inflation is rising so rapidly is energy costs. Even for my farmers, fertilizer is made from phosphates and natural gas. Diesel fuel is used in the vehicles and tractors and trucks. Our ability to provide that food for the world is being hampered because we are going to lose money when we grow crops even though they may bring a higher price than they did just a few months ago.

So many components of what we purchase in this country and one of the reasons costs are all rising is because of the price of oil and gas. I am confused by the policies that many in this body promote. At the same time, they are asking for relief at the pump. Yet, time and time again, what policies, what legislation, what conversations here, what actions are taken—particu-

larly by Democrats—are to reduce the supply of oil and natural gas.

It makes no sense to me when the policy—in fact, how can it make sense for people to propose to eliminate the tax on gas? I suppose their interest in making gas more expensive is to reduce the use of oil and natural gas fossil fuels, but on the other hand, if they lower the tax on gas, it would lower the price, which is to encourage the ability to purchase.

President Biden asked the Russians to increase their production in order to alleviate the price at the pump in the United States. We have been talking to Europe about how we are going to help them solve their natural gas shortage should we have a crisis in Ukraine and natural gas can no longer be imported from Russia, and we are working to provide more natural gas.

We should be doing everything in our country to increase the supply. The definition of “inflation” is, I think, pretty basic. It is “too few goods being chased by the same amount of dollars.”

Even this week in the Banking Committee, the conversation over the last month has been about whether or not the Federal Reserve, which has no ability, no legal ability, no purpose in setting the price of gas and oil—and they would do so by trying to restrict loans by financial institutions to oil and gas energy producers at the same time they are supposed to be combating inflation.

So it seems to me on one hand and on the other hand, they don't make any sense. They are not logical and in so many instances, hypocritical.

We want to have an energy policy that is to produce more. I am “all of the above” on energy, but the policies of this country which we see trying to eliminate oil and natural gas, fossil fuels, at a time in which the cost at the pump, the cost in agriculture, the cost at the grocery store is rising—we should be focused on trying to make certain that Americans can afford to live in this country. We will not achieve that by trying to eliminate or reduce the supply of natural gas and oil.

I will be talking to my constituents about this issue, as I return home this week.

I wish we could have a coherent conversation, discussion, on policy development.

We need to produce more. The days in which we became energy independent in the last administration were ones in which we felt a sense of relief, a sense of safety and security, and I long for the days in which we are able to recognize that our national security and our economics are benefited by a strong oil and gas industry meeting the needs of Americans, taking care of ourselves at home and providing greater national security as we deal with crises around the world.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. Kaine). The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I want to commend my colleague and friend from Kansas. He said very, very eloquently that the administration's policies right now, which are anti-energy—they are driving up energy prices on working families. And it is national security suicide to unilaterally disarm energy when Putin uses energy as a weapon. We all know that.

Some of the window dressing here on these bills lately from my Senate Democratic colleagues is just that—political window dressing. We all need to go to the White House and say: Get your act together, Mr. President, your team. Produce more American energy.

That is what we all need. It will help with inflation and will help with national security.

So to my colleague from Kansas, thank you very much. We all come from States that produce energy. And these are great American workers, too, by the way, who sometimes get maligned because they produce energy. Imagine that.

TRIBUTE TO DOUG KEIL

Mr. President, I want to move on to my favorite time of the week. It is Thursday, so I usually come down on the Senate floor and talk about the Alaskan of the Week.

Now, we all believe our States are the best. Each State loves to brag a little bit about their own State. That is great. It is what makes our country competitive, a little bit of competition here in the Senate. But I happen to speak the truth when I talk about how Alaska is the best State, and it is because of the people.

I am going to talk a little bit about Doug Keil, who is today's Alaskan of the Week. I always like to start—you know, the pages enjoy this speech a lot because we get to talk a little bit about Alaska and the adventures and what is happening in the great State of Alaska. So I will give a little update on that.

On January 22, that was the polar night in Utqiagvik, AK, the northernmost town in all of North America. What happened on January 22 is that polar night—as they call it there—finally ended. That is 65 days of darkness finally ended. That is 65 days of darkness.

On January 22, the Sun crept a little over the horizon briefly. Like a long lost friend, the community gathered to say hello to the Sun. It has been cold up North. It has been a cold winter. It is about 20 below in Utqiagvik today. It has been relatively balmy in Anchorage where our Alaskan of the Week lives—warm enough to be sleeting right now.

But in all weather, all around the State, people are getting out, gathering, enjoying the Sun that stays in our skies a little bit longer each day. They are dogsledding—training for the Iditarod. They are snow-machining, playing hockey, skiing, snowboarding—so many winter sports.

We, in our State, are chockful of excellent winter athletes—great winter

athletes. We punch way above our weight in terms of Winter Olympics. Many Alaskans are competing now in Beijing, as we speak, and we are rooting for all of them. Of course, we are rooting for all of America's athletes.

We are also preparing to root for the amazing athletes who will be competing in the Paralympics, also in Beijing, starting March 4. Again, many Alaskans will be there competing: cross-country skier, Grace Miller; snowboarder, Katy Maddry, a former Alaskan of the Week alum; and former gold medal Paralympian, Andrew Kurka. He will be competing in Beijing in the sit-ski events.

Now, I am mentioning all of this because our Alaskan of the Week, Doug Keil, says every one of these athletes—both in the Olympics and in Paralympics and all of our amateur athletes across the State—are there because of athletes who have gone before them. I think that is true.

Paving that path, of course, has been all the more challenging for America's Paralympian athletes. But it is a path that Doug, our Alaskan of the Week, has really paved for Alaska—for America—a deep one. And he has done it through grit and pain and determination.

In 1980, Doug Keil brought home two gold medals from the 1980 Paralympic Games in Norway. That was the second-ever Paralympic Games. He was the first American male to bring home gold in those games, and he spent the next 30-plus years building not only the structures and the organizations but, importantly, the culture in Alaska and in America to make sure other athletes with disabilities could come after him.

Let me tell you a little bit about our Alaskan of the Week, Doug Keil. Doug was born in Beirut, Lebanon. His parents Don and Margaret, who went by "Midge," were adventuresome. From New York, they were on a 4-year overseas trip. Don, the father, was teaching high school physics and Midge was working at the United Nations in the Palestinian refugee camps when they had Doug, the oldest of what would be five children, four girls and Doug. I know one of the girls really well, Carrie, Doug's sister, who works as part of my team in Anchorage doing constituent casework. She recently hit the milestone of successfully helping 2,000 different Alaskans. Carrie, great job. You are amazing—just as amazing as your brother Doug. Her success rate is off the charts. I see it every day.

When Doug and Carrie's family came back to America, they moved to Alaska. Don's brother—that is the dad, Don—built houses, and Don helped him for a while. Eventually, Don the father—Doug's father—got a senior job with the Federal Aviation Administration.

Doug, our Alaskan of the Week, was an active kid. He loved sports, mostly baseball and skiing. His plan was to follow in his father's footsteps and go to Springfield College in Massachu-

setts. He wanted to be a physical education teacher and to play baseball, but he had some tragedy. When Doug was 15, he took a trip to Juneau to visit a school friend. And on August 28, 1968, he and his friend were exploring an old gold mine in Juneau. Doug got struck by 24,000 volts of electricity—24,000 volts of electricity. In the process, he lost an arm and lost a leg. As we can all expect, the next few years were very difficult ones for Doug and his family. As he said, "When you get hit by 24,000 volts of electricity, it messes you up physically. Mentally, my whole world was gone."

Talk about grit and determination. He spent about 2 years in the hospital and his dreams, he thought, had died. To make it all the more difficult, his father had to move the family to the DC area for a job with the FAA when Doug was just a sophomore in high school, still learning how to use an artificial arm and artificial leg. But the family stuck together. They had faith, and they pulled through.

Back in Alaska, though, something remarkable happened. At this point, Doug hadn't tried to ski again because he thought those days were over without an arm, without a leg. But someone in their church told his parents about a program in Colorado—in Winter Park, CO—where they were training athletes to ski with disabilities. The first day he was there, Doug went to Winter Park. It coincided with the first day of what was then called the National Handicapped Championships.

Doug said:

I saw amazing athletes. I saw men and women who had come back [many disabled veterans from Vietnam]. . . I saw them skiing and it opened up my eyes to a completely different world.

Doug was inspired in many ways by our disabled Vietnam veterans who helped train him, helped inspire him. He came back to Alaska to train in this area and went back to Winter Park in 1977 to race in the Nationals in the slalom event and did so again in 1979, both of which qualified him for the 1980 Paralympics.

Along with two gold medals from those Olympics, he brought a mission back to Alaska: starting a skiing program for people with physical disabilities. He said at the time that skiing was amazing. It would give him a "feeling of motion. It's like running again. It can be fluid. When it feels good up through your body, your body smiles and when your body smiles, you smile." And he wanted others to have that experience.

In the 1980s, of course, Alaska had mountains and snow and landscape begging to be played in but did not have a culture that encouraged people with disabilities to be part of those winter activities. Doug explained to a reporter in 1980 that as a one-legged skier, he was an anomaly in Alaska.

He said:

I've been skiing [there] for 5 years by myself. Up . . . [in Alaska]—

Someone with disabilities—

[T]hey see me coming down the slopes and they say "What the [heck] is that?" People just [weren't] used to [seeing] it [in 1980].

And this is where the story moves from one individual, Doug, to thousands. Doug and a handful of others got busy. They formed a nonprofit called Challenge Alaska, and they hit the road. Doug, who had a full-time job in cable, still made the time for starting this great organization, Challenge Alaska. They got people out on the slopes. They trained them. They gathered all the adaptive equipment they could get their hands on, and they dug in.

Forty years later, with an expanded mission now including all outdoor activities, including summer activities—kayaking, cycling, wheelchair Frisbee, fishing, camping, and so much more—Challenge Alaska, started by Doug Keil, has helped over a thousand people in Alaska get out into Alaska's great outdoors in winter and summer. Some of the most incredible athletes you have ever met started their careers in athletics with Challenge Alaska.

Just two weekends ago, my wife Julie and I had the opportunity to attend Challenge Alaska's 40th anniversary gala dinner. Now, I know a lot of my colleagues here—we go out to a lot of events when we are back home. This was one of the most inspiring events I have attended in a long, long time. Julie and I got to sit with the current executive director of Challenge Alaska, Nate Boltz; his wife, Leah; daughter, Anna; his parents, Jim and Laurie; his grandmother, Adeline. There were amazing speeches. One young man named Ryan Johnson, a recent high school graduate with cerebral palsy, spoke. Incredible. There wasn't a dry eye in the house.

And, of course, Doug was there. Doug was there, the founder of Challenge Alaska—40 years of work—and he was honored for this great life achievement.

In that 1980 article I mentioned earlier, I talked about when he was talking about skiing on the slopes alone as someone with one leg, he said that if he could have a plaque that said he was instrumental in starting a program to help other people with disabilities in Alaska to learn to enjoy the outdoors—skiing, winter, summer—he would be a happy man. That was 40 years ago when he said that. Well, he should be happy. He has done that and so much more. Thousands of people have been positively impacted by what he has done.

Here is another remarkable thing. His inspiration went far beyond Alaska. It has literally touched the globe. He tells the story about how in the nineties, 13 people with disabilities from Japan came to ski with and learn from the people in Challenge Alaska. Doug was working at Challenge Alaska. He, unfortunately, wasn't able to ski with our Japanese visitors. But when they were leaving town, he met

them at the airport to say goodbye. One of them, who was also missing an arm and a leg from a construction accident, stepped forward and, through an interpreter, told Doug that after his accident, he thought about taking his own life. Then this young Japanese man said to Doug that he saw a documentary about Doug. And he said to Doug:

I vowed that I would learn to ski, [I would] come to Alaska and ski with [Challenge Alaska]. Thank you [Doug] for saving my life.

That is pretty powerful stuff right there—one person in Japan whose life was saved by Doug Keil and all the great people at Challenge Alaska.

So, Doug, thank you for saving lives. Thank you for your inspiration to so many. Thank you for what you have done for Alaska, for Challenge Alaska, for the State, for the Paralympian athletes we are going to watch and cheer on here in a couple of weeks. And congratulations on being our Alaskan of the Week.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 3632

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, a few days ago or a few weeks—about 2 weeks ago, I was surprised to read in an article that, as part of the American Rescue Plan, there was this \$30-million program that would be sending drug paraphernalia to people suffering from addiction in this country.

And so I said something about it, and the administration came out and said that is not true. We are not going to use it for that. We are not going to be sending out crack pipes or meth pipes to anybody. In fact, they even wrote a letter to a fellow Senator here in that regard.

So then I said, well, since—let's just make sure. Right? Like, let's just file a bill language that just makes it clear that we are not going to be sending drug paraphernalia like a pipe or things that work with a pipe, that taxpayers aren't going to be paying for that.

And lo and behold, I was surprised by the response. And now, when you read more carefully the letter that they wrote to Senator BLACKBURN, you see exactly what the problem is here.

They don't plan on sending crack pipes or meth pipes to anybody. What they plan on sending is what they call a mouthpiece. And a mouthpiece isn't what you think. It is not like some flat thing that you put in your mouth. No, the mouthpiece is basically the cylindrical tube—straw-looking thing—that you attach to the crack pipe. So the pipe will have to be shared by the addicts, but they are each going to have their own little tube that they can attach to smoke it.

Well, I just don't think the Federal Government should be paying for that to send that to people. I think, frankly, this is insane. I think most people would agree, and I think most people would be surprised.

And the things you discover when you actually file these things and work on it—because we came up with language. We said: OK. Here is the bill, and here is what we want to do. And they came back and said: We will not agree to it if it includes that device that attaches to it.

So, apparently, they don't want to send out crack pipes, but they do want to send out the tubes that attach to the crack pipes so that those who are addicted to crack or any of these other drugs—illicit drugs that you can smoke can be consumed safely somehow, as if there is any safe way to smoke meth or crack, which there isn't.

And so what I have come here to do today is very simple: I want this bill to pass. I don't know why anyone could possibly object to it unless you believe that you should be sending out cylindrical tubing which attaches to a crack pipe to smoke and that can be removed to allow multiple people to use the same pipe.

And that is the loophole that they want. That is what they want me to change this bill to allow them to send out. And I think that is nuts, guys. I don't know how else to describe it. There is no, like, fancy word for it. It is crazy. This is insane. This is the kind of insanity that people read about and say: This can't be true. It is true. It is actually worse than I thought.

And so that is why I am hoping we can pass this today. Apparently, there will be an objection.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions be discharged from further consideration of S. 3632 and that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration. I further ask that the Rubio substitute amendment at the desk be considered and agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed, and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, and I think my friend from Florida knows I will. This entire issue is a misnomer. There have been a few online things to try to make a big deal out of it, and I am sorry that some have fallen for it, but the Biden administration produced a letter this week clarifying this misunderstanding.

The administration stated clearly they never authorized use of Federal funding for smoke pipes and will not in the future. In fact, I don't think any administration has.

Of course, the bill that the Senator from Florida is proposing goes much further than Republicans say it would. It would severely cripple our ability to respond to addiction, which has taken 100,000 lives a year right now, including lives in his State and mine.

We offered an alternative; but that was rejected.

We actually have to go to the CR now. The House is gone. We have to pass it—the CR and send it to the President without amendments or our government funding runs out.

And I might just say—I mean, everybody has the right to speak about anything they want. Everybody has the right to make any kind of political point for any group they want, but let's talk about being U.S. Senators.

A war is about to start in Ukraine, in all likelihood. And what we are saying is we will start putting all of these things in, slow up a continuing resolution so the United States Government will have to shut down tomorrow night.

And we can stand there and Putin can say: Why should I listen to them? Three or four people can go on their Senate floor and shut down the government. Why should I listen to them?

So I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WARNOCK). Objection is heard.

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, couple things. To be clear, I am not slowing down the continuing resolution. This is my bill. It has got nothing to do with the continuing resolution.

The reason why we are not voting on the continuing resolution is because there is a bunch of people missing; there are not enough people here yet to vote for it. That is why it is being slowed down. So I took this opportunity to offer my bill.

And I would just say, my observation would be that Vladimir Putin is probably—if he is even paying attention—I don't know what time it is. He probably has his hands full with his plans to invade and conquer parts of Ukraine—I think he would be wondering why would I be scared of a country who is going to send out cylindrical tubing to people addicted to crack and meth, because I think he probably thinks it is crazy too, as crazy as he is.

So, again, my bill goes—I get it. They are not going to send out pipes. That doesn't make me feel better because they are going to send out—with the money of the American taxpayer, they are going to send out cylindrical tubing which is attached to a crack pipe and can be removed so each and every one of the people using that pipe—multiple people can use the pipe but use a different cylindrical tube to attach to it. And I just don't think the American people should be paying for that, and that is what HHS has basically admitted they want to do with this money. And I didn't think this was going to be controversial, but apparently it is because there has been an objection, so here we are.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, the suggestion is many people aren't here to vote. Well, let's bring up the continuing resolution. Let's vote it up or down. Let's say to the rest of the world, including Russia, the most pow-

erful nation on Earth can stay open or a few Senators can say: No, golly, we got to get something on television. We ought to close down the government.

The Senator from Florida is welcome to bring up his bill sometime in regular order. Let's not slow up things now. So let's vote on the continuing resolution. Let's show the United States of America and the rest of the world that we can stay open and that we are not afraid to stay open. We will stay open, and we all—I think we could probably say unanimously, I would hope—oppose what Russia apparently is planning to do in Ukraine.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BRAUN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 4930

Mr. BRAUN. Mr. President, over the next couple hours, we are going to have another CR vote, and we are going to get some votes on amendments.

When I came to the Senate 3 years ago, a little over that, one of my main goals—I always respected the Senator from Oklahoma, Dr. Tom Coburn.

I first saw him when he was actually on one of the shows talking about the same subject that I harp on all the time. The difference is, by standards of indebtedness, we had no real worries other than he was one that could see into the future.

I come from the world of running a business, was on a school board, State legislature. You couldn't get by with what we get by with here. You had a budgeting process. When I was a State legislator, you took it through committees. You brought in witnesses, you fleshed it out. Maybe you didn't need more money. Generally, even at the statehouse, they would ask for more. It wasn't necessarily the case.

You did the hard work, rolling up your sleeves, which Hoosiers appreciated. Do you know what it has given us back in the State of Indiana? The highest credit rating you can have as a State. It has given us rainy day funds.

When COVID came along, we could have gotten by without a dollar from the Federal Government. That is what happens when you live your everyday life with responsibility, just like every American has to, just like you have to do in any other level of government.

Think about running a business. Imagine, up until the recent spending spree, we were only borrowing roughly 23 percent of every dollar that we spend here—and this isn't on tangible investments; this is on consumption. There is nothing to show for it.

A lot of the things we do, a lot of the things that people look to us to do, we need; but we are doing a disservice to our kids and our grandkids—by the way, who we are actually borrowing

the money from—when we run the biggest business in the world by the seat of its pants.

I am going to tell you just generally how this all plays out. In 4½ years, we are going to completely go through the Medicare trust fund. And by the way, healthcare expenses based upon a broken healthcare industry that is not transparent does not deliver the consumer good value, something that all of us that own businesses other than the healthcare business have to grapple with every year. They need to reform themselves, and that would bring Medicare and Medicaid into where it wasn't costing us so much. But still then, even if you save there, we probably would find a way to spend the savings.

We are currently, basically the only reserve currency. That is what keeps our interest rates so low. Historically, they have been three to four times what they are now. And you cannot run now probably close to \$1.5 trillion deficits on to the \$30 trillion we are already in debt and think that is a good business plan for the biggest business in the world.

So especially for the folks on the other side of the aisle, but I am going to say we have been complicit as Republicans. We roll over to give them what they want on domestic spending, and they do the same on defense spending, which I think is probably the most important thing we do. And all of a sudden, everybody is happy. It is called bipartisan, but it is not honest to the American public.

So, here, we are going to do what we have been doing for years. We are going to vote on a CR later. But if we are ever going to get this place back in good shape, we have to have the political will and the discipline to get back to budgeting and not spend beyond our means because, some day, we may not be the reserve currency. And after we go through the Medicare trust fund, which will probably replenish by borrowing more money, Social Security depletes in about 11 years. I say that because nobody here talks about it, and it wouldn't be that difficult to solve.

In the real world, you make the tough decisions, you get through it, and you are better off for it when you get that behind you.

So I am going to leave it there this evening. I am going to ask all of my colleagues to please vote on a balanced budget amendment that makes it so easy that it just says your resolution that you bring up each year—you have got to do it, you have got to do it on time—has to balance the budget in 10 years. That even gives a lot more latitude than what I really thought was necessary, but I also want to make it to where every one of us can say yes to a balanced budget amendment like this because we owe it to our kids and our grandkids.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 267, H.R. 6617; that the only amendments in order be the Lee amendment No. 4929, Braun amendment No. 4930, Cruz amendment No. 4927; that at 5:15 p.m., the Senate vote in relation to the amendments in the order listed; that upon disposition of the Cruz amendment, the bill be considered read a third time and the Senate vote on passage of the bill, as amended, if amended, with 60 affirmative votes required for adoption of the Braun amendment and on passage of the bill; and that there be 2 minutes for debate equally divided in the usual form prior to each vote, all without further intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

FURTHER ADDITIONAL EXTENDING GOVERNMENT FUNDING ACT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of H.R. 6617, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 6617) making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2022, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

AMENDMENT NO. 4929

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I call up my amendment No. 4929, and ask that it be reported by number.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment by number.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Utah [Mr. LEE], for himself and Mr. MARSHALL, proposes an amendment numbered 4929.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To prohibit funding for COVID-19 vaccine mandates)

After section 101 in division A, insert the following:

SEC. 102. None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available under the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2022 (division A of Public Law 117-43), as amended by this Act, may be obligated or expended to—

(1) implement or enforce—

(A) section 1910.501 of title 29, Code of Federal Regulations (or a successor regulation);

(B) Executive Order 14042 of September 9, 2021 (86 Fed. Reg. 50985; relating to ensuring adequate COVID safety protocols for Federal contractors);

(C) Executive Order 14043 of September 9, 2021 (86 Fed. Reg. 50989; relating to requiring Coronavirus Disease 2019 vaccination for Federal employees);

(D) the interim final rule issued by the Department of Health and Human Services on November 5, 2021, entitled “Medicare and Medicaid Programs; Omnibus COVID-19 Health Care Staff Vaccination” (86 Fed. Reg. 61555); or

(E) the memorandum signed by the Secretary of Defense on August 24, 2021, for

“Mandatory Coronavirus Disease 2019 Vaccination of Department of Defense Service Members”; or

(2) promulgate, implement, or enforce any rule, regulation, or other agency statement, that is substantially similar to a regulation, Executive Order, rule, or memorandum described in paragraph (1).

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, vaccine mandates are morally wrong and widely unpopular. Millions of Americans are still required by this Federal mandate to be vaccinated or lose their job.

The people’s elected lawmakers here in Congress haven’t instituted these mandates. No, there is no Federal law putting them in place. President Biden and his bureaucrats are just treading deeply into the personal medical choices of Americans without an act of Congress authorizing them to do so.

Now, Congress has the chance to make these millions of voices across America be heard. That is, after all, our job. Our sole job is to make Federal law, to give voice to those who elected us. We can state clearly, boldly, decisively today that Federal vaccine mandates do not belong in the United States of America.

We can stand for millions of vulnerable Americans who just want to go to work so that they have the chance simply to put food on the table for their families. That is not too much to ask.

The pandemic is waning, but it is waning just as our economic problems are just beginning. If we want to control the high price of everything, the lack of availability that comes with the related supply chain crisis, and keep the American economy moving, we must stand against these illegal, immoral, and unconstitutional mandates.

Look, the American people are sick and tired of the Federal Government micromanaging every minute detail of their lives. They are exhausted from the mandates and from the bureaucrats who they didn’t vote for and never could vote for and never would vote for.

The brave men and women of our military, the Federal workers, the Federal contractors, people who work for Federal contractors—even a subdivision of a Federal contractor that doesn’t actually provide any Federal contract work—along with medical professionals—all these workers across every part of our great land who are sucked up into this mandate, they all deserve better than pink slips and boots out the door, simply for making their own medical choices.

So I implore my colleagues with all the urgency I am capable of communicating, to stand up for American workers, stand up for our economy, stand up for freedom, and vote to withhold funding from these unconstitutional mandates.

It is quite significant that the very first clause of the very first section of the very first article of the Constitution says that “all legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in the Congress of the United States, which

shall consist of a Senate and a House of Representatives.”

It matters that this clause comes first, before everything else. And the reason it matters is because it is there to remind us of something. The most dangerous power within our Federal Government is not with the judiciary, it is not with the executive branch; it is right here in this branch because we have the power to prescribe law. We have the power within our Federal Government to provide what should be, what the law says, what people have to do. That is why the Founding Fathers were careful not to entrust it to any branch of government other than this one, not because those who would occupy these positions would necessarily be any wiser or any brighter or inherently more cautious than everyone else, except in one critical respect: This is the Federal branch most accountable to the people at the most regular intervals. You can fire every Member of the House every 2 years. You can fire one-third of us every 2 years.

We are the branch that is accountable. That is why we have been given the most dangerous power within government, the power to make Federal law. How then does this relate to illegal, unconstitutional, immoral, and wildly unpopular vaccine mandates? Well, it matters because that is an exercise of Federal law that Congress never enacted.

They have arrogated to themselves within the executive branch an authority that they do not have based on a contrivance, based on a tortured, butchered manipulation of statutory text that doesn’t tell people that they have got to choose between getting an unwanted medical procedure and unemployment, unemployment in a context that it is likely to lead to unemployability. And, indeed, it was designed to do that. We know that because those who put these policies in place have told us as much.

Look, everybody has been through a lot in the last 2 years—Democrats, Republicans alike. This virus has been no respecter of persons, of red States and of blue States. Just the same, the American people understand that we are ready to move on. We are ready to not have government dictating every aspect of our lives.

COVID is no excuse for a government to do something that is categorically immoral. It is no excuse to do something that we all know is wrong. We would never justify anyone in rendering a threat against their friend, their neighbor, their employee, that if you don’t bow, if you don’t defer to Presidential medical orthodoxy, I am going to make you lose your job and make it impossible for you to put bread on the table for your children. No sane, moral, decent person would do that. We must not allow them to do that. We must never allow the executive branch of government to exercise authority